



Three Love Tales

AFTER RICHARD WAGNER

TANNHÄUSER LOHENGRIN PARSIFAL

BY

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The title originally chosen for this book was "Sacred and Profane Love," the title of Titian's picture, but this was changed on the eve of publication.

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Introduction

THE legend, wrote Wagner in whatever age or nation it occurs, has the merit of seizing nothing but the purely human content of that age or nation and of giving forth that content in a form peculiar to itself of sharpest outline, and therefore swiftly understandable. And the legendary tone and atmosphere, he adds, has power to release the artist from the cramping effect of having to explain the groundwork of his action. It silences the question, Why? A folk legend is like a bit of nature—it is not a construction—it grew so like a tree, and it is for us to take it without question, and to realize, if we can what it holds of greatness, of depth, of significance.

Part, at least, of the manifold significance of the three Wagner dramas which are here retold in narrative form¹ is indicated by the title which has been borrowed for them from Titian's famous picture. It is the part which Wagner has lifted into prime significance. The conflict of sacred with profane love was a theme very much in his mind. In *Tannhäuser* it is illustrated with epic breadth and simplicity by the contrasted figures of Venus and Elisabeth. But beneath

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this broad simplicity, and softening the violent contrast, Wagner, it is essential to note, has by many subtle touches shown that Venus and Elisabeth are not at bottom two separate and irreconcilable forces. Their severance was caused by the imagination of the Middle Ages, obsessed by that horror of the flesh which was but the reaction from pagan licence, and as unwholesome as that licence itself. The introduction of the gracious figure of the earth-goddess, Holda, in the shepherd's song which falls on Tannhauser's ears after he has torn himself free from the enchantments of the Venusberg is one of these touches. Wagner's own account of this episode shows clearly his point of view.

Holda, the kind, mild, and gracious goddess of the ancient Germans, whose yearly coming through the land brought prosperity and plenty, with the introduction of Christianity suffered the fate of Wodan and the other gods, the belief in their existence and wonderful power, being deeply rooted among the Folk, was not entirely denied, but their earlier blessings and influences were made to appear suspicious and of evil tendency. Holda was banished to the interior of the earth and mountains, her coming brought misfortune and her followers were represented as a wild horde. Later (because the belief in her mild, life-bringing control over

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nature was still unconsciously held by the common folk) her name even was changed to Venus, to whom all misfortune, evil, sensual delight, and enticing and bewitching seduction was attributed. The interior of the Hörselberg near Eisenach, was regarded as one of her chief seats in Thuringia

The legend goes that Tannhäuser a knight and minstrel (mythical, and according to later accounts fully identified with Heinrich von Ofterdingen of the Wartburg tournaments) ventured into the Venus Mountain, and passed a whole year at the Court of Venus.

In a word the difference between Holda and Venus is entirely man made and ecclesiastical. ¹ Again, we note that when at the close of the drama the Pilgrims Chant is heard once more, and for the last time and is made the vehicle for proclaiming the redemption of the hero the new strain of ecstasy and triumph that blends with its solemnity is derived from the carol of the Venusberg

In the following version of the Tannhäuser legend the Wagnerian original has been as closely adhered to as the change from the dramatic to the

¹ From *Tannhäuser and the Mastersingers of Nuremberg* by Alice Cleather and Basil Crump. The works of these writers contain the most illuminating account of the Wagnerian dramas and their meaning as illustrated in music and in words that the writer has met with.

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narrative form would permit. Much of logue and all the more important lyrical are translated in the original metres. The simply presented as being, as nearly as Wagner's drama in narrative form. But *grin*, owing to the fact that the text is so associated with the music and has so little dent form of its own, seemed to require treatment. The folk-element, also, is so vital a part of the drama that in narrative some kind of ballad form seem much experimenting, the only one which harmonize with the subject. The famous Wedding Song in the third Act has ever, been retained with a view to recall beautiful melody to which Lohengrin are conducted to the bridal chamber in the shape given by Wagner to the story adhered to, but a new turn has been episode of the fatal question and the broken Lohengrin and Elsa are drawn as having of them in the right. Lohengrin's mystical element in religion, with its gift natural power and its demand for comp surrender. This was embodied in the Church under outward forms which necessary but by no means an eternal the development of the spirit of man.

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the other hand, with her woman's directness, her heart guided intuitions, is the herald of the spirit of revolt against ecclesiastical bondage, of daring inquiry and of that noblest type of love which can only realize itself in the closest union the most clear-eyed confidence, between man and woman. Thus they are two aspects of one truth incapable of reconciliation at the time, but destined to unite in the end when the clue to their synthesis should be found.

The primitive story while in one aspect a variant of the world wide myth of the lost lover of which the most celebrated literary rendering is the tale of Eros and Psyche, has also evident references to solar and seasonal phenomena. The swan, returning with spring to its summer haunts in the northern lakes, is a well known solar emblem among the North European peoples. The name Lohengrin suggests a form of the Celtic sun-god, Grannos (Irish, Grían the sun). The course of the story shows the forlorn and imprisoned Summer rescued by a divine champion the Sun, who in the end has to depart from earth but not without leaving behind him the promise of another lord and champion, typified in the youth returned from Fairyland.

In the tale of *Parzival* the writer must admit that he has not found himself wholly in sympathy

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with this creation of Wagner's later thought. The story as here told is not a reproduction of the Wagnerian music-drama. It is rather, with certain borrowings from Wagner, a free rendering of the tale as it was told in the noblest of the mediaeval versions.

In its original form, the story of the Quest of the Cup and the Spear belongs to the oldest Aryan mythology. In Indian myth we find the Cup as a golden vessel from which wealth and fertility are poured out, it symbolizes the sun, while the Spear is the lightning-weapon of the sky-god, Indra, by means of which the sun is liberated from malign influences and the wholesome course of the seasons, which are supposed to have suffered some derangement, is restored.

Outlines or fragments of this nature-myth are clearly discernible in the legendary literature and folk-lore of Ireland, Wales, and Brittany. But in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the tale took an entirely new form. The collocation of the Cup and the Spear suggested to some bard, probably a Breton, whose name we shall never know, a Christian and eucharistic significance; and the nature-myth became a mystical tale of sin, expiation, and redemption, which soon connected itself with the current Arthurian legends. These legends it coloured with its own strangeness and

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spirituality and it helped them to take possession, as they did, of the heart and soul of Christendom. Some features of the ancient Aryan myth clung to the story in all the transformations and developments which it underwent in the Middle Ages, particularly in the conception of the Grail (derived from the Latin *cratella*, a cup) as an agent of vigour fertility and life. The name of the hero variously given as Parzival, Peredur Peronnik, etc. appears to signify something like Champion of the Cup (Celtic *per* a cup or bowl).

The finest of the mediaeval renderings of the legend is undoubtedly the long epic tale of *Parzival* by Wolfram von Eschenbach written about the year 1200. On this the present version is largely based, though episodes from Celtic sources have also been introduced as well as some details from the drama of Richard Wagner. Wolfram was the first writer to conceive the redemption of the Grail and its order of knight-hood from the curse brought on them by sin as effected by a moral quality not merely by magic or by force of arms. That moral quality was the pure compassionate ardour of the champion who at first fails to achieve the quest through a blind obedience, characteristic of the 'guileless fool, to the lessons he had been taught regarding the external demeanour

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required of an aspirant to chivalry. He had yet to learn to separate the substance from the form of true knighthood. Wagner follows Wolfram in this conception, but he introduces into the character and career of Parsifal an element of monkish asceticism which is foreign to Wolfram and to the oldest mediaeval versions.

The present rendering follows the older sources in bringing into prominence not only the injunction laid on Parsifal to show no curiosity in a stranger's house, but also his mother's ironic advice to him to bestow a kiss on every fair lady whom he shall meet on his way. In the mediaeval tales, however, the kiss is only a source of some trouble and embarrassment. Here it has been made a cardinal episode in the story. It reveals to Kundry, who is here made the recipient of it, a new type of man, and awakens in her a kind of love which she has never felt before, thus leading in the end to her self-sacrifice and redemption. For Parsifal it means the first dawning of a sense of the attraction and power of sex, and prepares him for the nobler revelation of it in the smile of Blansch, which saves him in the hour of temptation when the kiss is returned by Kundry before Klingsor's palace.

The figure of Blansch has no counterpart in the drama of Wagner, who admits no women into

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the Grail Castle—though in his earlier opera, *Lohengrin* (as in Wolfram's epic) the hero is a son of Parsifal. Blanschoten corresponds to the Condwiler amour of Wolfram and the Blanchefleur of the *Conte del Graal* just in so far as she is the bride of Parsifal, but no farther. She and her relations to the hero are an invention of the present writer who in this and other respects has used the same freedom in reshaping the details of the old legend as the mediæval writers, who often differ widely from each other did not scruple to employ.

The manner of Kundry's death and indeed her part in the story generally are also peculiar to the present version. The supernatural mechanism by which Wagner makes her now a servant of the Grail and now an instrument of Klingsor did not seem adaptable to a narrative version and is here reduced to an inward conflict between the human and the diabolic elements in her nature.

The writer has found it a very difficult task to compress into manageable compass, without omitting anything essential to an understanding of the plot the immense luxuriance of the mediæval epic tale. He can only hope that the inherent power beauty and significance of the saga, which has so rarely received any original treatment in English literature, may win acceptance for this latest rendering of the ancient theme.

Tannhauser

Part II : The Venusberg

DEAD are the Gods of Greece this many
a day
Yet near a thousand years ago when yet
The pagan heart of man seemed but half
tamed

'Tis said that in Thuringian woods, among
The gaunt crags of the Hörselberg there dwelt
A creature fair and fell, in whom men deemed
They knew the Goddess of unholy love—
A Goddess once, a Demon now, yet graced
Still with the witchery of womanhood,
And mighty with the spell of the Divine.

So there with nymph and faun and bacchanal
And all the embodied Joys of the antique world
Queen Venus held her shameless court, and lured
The souls of hapless mortals to their doom.
And tho the sinner taken in her toils
Were lost for ever—tho the limbs she kissed
Were flung at last to where the greedy flames
Flicker and whisper on the floors of Hell—
Yet ever and anon some child of Man
Desperate with grief or weary of his life,
Would seek and find her palace in the hill,
And dwell with her and think himself a god,
Until the mortal senses flagged, until
The mortal heart grew cold—and thro the
flowers

Hell gaped to hide for aye his monstrous sin.

None knows the boundaries of that evil place.
The forest paths all shun it many a mile
Out of his way the weary chapman goes
From town to town across the ancient wood,

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Skirting that haunt of mystery and doom.
The maidens, going to and fro, who bear
Billets of wood upon their shoulders, pass
With quickened steps and with averted eyes,
Fearing they know not what. Yet some there be,
Maidens or youths, of gentle blood or base,
Roaming in springtime by the flowery ways,
Lured by a lovelier green across the glade—
Lured by the singing of an unseen bird—
Lured by a white shape flitting thro' the trees—
Who wander, half unwitting, from the path,
And ne'er are seen again. And some have told
How, when they left the path, a dread enchant-
ment

Mixed with sweet terror and undreamt-of bliss
Wrought in their hearts, and lured them on and on,
But they, with sudden, desperate resolve,
And pangs that rent the soul, had turned and fled
Through tearing briar and tangling undergrowth
Till on the old, familiar ways they stood,
Heartsick and trembling ; and a wild regret
They bore within their bosoms till they died.

THRO' these dim woods, behold, a glimmering
light

From gilded armour gleams! A knight that bears
A harp instead of shield rides slowly by—
Tannhäuser, king of song this many a year
In Landgraf Hermann's court. His brow is graven
With lines of thought and pain, his dark hair
streaked

With silver threads ; his head thrown back, he
scans

The little rifts of blue among the leaves

The Venusberg

Where silver clouds move softly by "Is Joy
He murmurs, 'there? Is there on all the earth,
In all the heavens, a medicine to appease
Passions, that storming thro the seas of life
Have found no shore, no haven, no delight
But turns to bitterness, and leaves the heart
Dusty and dry with unassuaged desire?

Brooding these things, he rode with loosened
rein,
Till, with a sudden clap of wings, there rose
Beside the path a grey wood-dove, that flew
Full in his horse's face. The great beast reared
It sprang aside and thro the trackless wood,
In panic uncontrollable, it bore
The reckless rider When he mastered it
He saw before him a grim wall of rock,
Crag above crag where in the clefts there grew
Great pines that spread abroad their twisted arms,
And by a cavern's mouth, hung round with fern
And honey d eglantine, he drew his rein.

There, as he paused, upon his soul like dew,
A deep enchantment fell. Again, it seemed,
Earth held for him some wonder to behold,
Some deed to do, some untried joy to win.
Full well indeed, he guessed where now he stood
Full bright the memory of the ancient tale
Of beauty and of horror burned in him.
Then while he lingered, thrilling with the thought,
From that dark hall a far-off music came,
And siren voices in soft waves of sound
Bore to his ear such words, in such a strain
Him seemed a man might fare for evermore,
Forgetting all on earth and all in Heaven,
To hearken to that music till he died

Sacted and Profane Love

SAILOR, come hither !
Let thy cheek wither
In the salt sea-wind,
Sailor, no more !

We have all blisses,
Caresses and kisses,
Tales of the wide world,
Laughter and lore.

All that men sigh for,
Live for and die for,
Vainly, eternally,
Have we in store.

Soft shall thy sleep be,
Dreamless and deep be.
Cares of the world lie
Far from our shore.

Sailor, come hither !
Hither, oh ! hither—
Let the cold world-wind
Vex thee no more !

So in that sunny place he lighted down,
And set his face toward the gloom, still guided
By that unearthly music On he strode,
Darkling, and if he stumbled, lo ! his hand
Was held by a soft hand ; and now he heard
Low laughter, or he groped, and touched a side
Smoother than silk that quivered and was gone
At length a light shone round him, and he walked

The Venusberg

Wrapt in a golden mist above, beneath,
Nor sky, nor earth there seemed. And slowly,
then,

Wreath'd in a thousand eddying spires, the mist
Lifted, the light broke in—he saw, he saw!

Within a bower he stood, whose walls were hung
With rose red silk, and perfumed like the rose.
No door there was, nor window, yet a light
Filled it, that seemed to throb from Her who sat
Upon a golden throne and gazed at him
Aye, there she sat, the Wonder of all Worlds!
Her red gold hair flow'd down on either side
And curled about her feet. One ivory breast
Was bare, and thro' the saffron robe she wore
Her whiteness shone. Distaught and dumb he
gazed,

Till on her scarlet lips began to dawn
A smile—how infinitely faint! And then
Even as a drift of snow on some high Alp,
Sun kissed, descends in thunder to the plain,
So at her feet he broke and fell a cry
Burst from her lips, his burning forehead dropped
Upon her knees and soon within his hair
He felt soft hands that trembled, and he felt
Her odorous warmth bend over him he heard
A voice that murmured like a bird that sings
Embowered deep in forest leaves. It said
"Tannhäuser—minstrel—warrior—and my Love,
I have sought thee many days The sweet
voice broke

And bathed in tears he lifted up his face
To meet a kiss that turned his blood to flame
And in a mist of fire his spirit swooned.

Part III : The Deliberance

TIME, with its tyrannous rhythm of Day
and Night,
Is but a painted board whereon men play
With thoughts and deeds, with life and
death—for stakes

That lie far, far beyond that chequered field !
So, while on earth a year has rolled away
Tannhäuser staking Heaven against a kiss
Hath played his reckless game, and now at last
Grows, as the wearied senses flag, aware
Of imminent forces gathering for his doom,
Moved by that patient, veiled Antagonist
Who plays with each man for what stakes he will
Still all around is fair before the bower
Of Venus lies a flowery forest glade,
Where youths and maidens whose bright limbs
are bound

With skins of leopards dance to notes more sweet
Than ever in the halls of mighty kings
Are heard by mortal men far off there gleams
A belt of summer sea, where sirens stand
Naked as morning on the rocks, and chant
Their magic strain to ocean wearied men.
Yet as the wild notes stream upon the wind,
And still more fierce and more tumultuous
The Bacchic dances whirl, there falls a mist
That steals the colour from the flowery lawn,
That turns to grey the forest greenery,
That chills the blood, and bids, with looks abashed,
The couples part, that now on tides of passion
Were borne like dead leaves on an autumn gale.
At last, with notes untunable and slow

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The music drooped to silence. Then the Knight,
Lifting his weary head from Venus' lap,
Cried out aloud : " Ah, woe is me to wake !
God, let me sleep again ! " " Belovèd," then
The Queen of Love replied, " what troubleth thee ?
Say, whither roam thy thoughts ? " Tannhäuser
gazed

With haggard eyes upon her. Then he spake .

" I lay in dreams. Methought I heard from far
A sound that long mine ears have heard no more.
Methought I listened to the chime of bells—
How long, ah me ! since last those chimes I heard !
How time hath passed since hither first I came
I cannot measure. Days and months for me
Are nothing, since no more I see the sun,
No more at night the friendly stars of heaven.
I see no more renewed the tender green
That brings the summer back. The nightingale
No more I hear, spring's advent heralding—
And must I hear them, see them, ne'er again ? "

Then Venus started from her couch and spake .
" What hast thou said ? What foolish plaints are
these ?

Hast thou already wearied of these charms,
The marvels which my love vouchsafed thee ? Or
How is't ? Doth being a god repent thee so ?
Hast thou forgot so soon how sorely once
Thou sufferedst ? And now what joys are thine ?
Up, up my minstrel ! Take thy harp in hand,
And sing of Love—which thou canst celebrate
With praise so sweet, it won the Queen of Love !
Yea, sing of Love, whose highest meed is thine."

And then Tannhäuser caught his harp and
sang .

The Deliberance

THY praise resound ! Exalted be the power
That wrought such miracles of love for me !
Those raptures sweet, thy love's unrivalled dower,
My highest theme of song shall ever be.
For love, for happiness, my bosom panted
My senses thirsted passion's joy to prove
Then what alone to gods thou erst hadst granted,
To me, a mortal, didst thou give thy love
Yet mortal, mortal still I be !
Thy love is all too great for me !
A god's enjoyments never die
The slave of time and change am I
Not pleasure only charms my heart,
In joy I long for sorrow's smart.
From thee, my Queen, I must away—
Ah, Goddess, let me part, I pray !

What strain is this for me " cried Venus then,
" To hear within the bower of Love ? and why
To tones of dreary sadness sinks thy song ?
Where are the glory and the passion fled
That bade thee sing of Love, of Love alone ?
What meaneth it ? Wherein hath failed my love ?
Belovèd, say for what thou blamest me ?

Again Tannhäuser struck his harp, again
Upon the heavy-scented air were borne
The notes of mortal yearning and unrest

TO praise thy love my song shall never tire.
Blest, ever blest, who once hath known thy
charms !
Thrice blest who with impassioned hot desire
Hath learnt the love of gods within thine arms !
The marvels of thy realm my senses ravish

Sacred and Profane Love

Enchanting rapture floats upon the air ;
Thou needst not any gift that earth can lavish ;
In the wide world is naught so sweet, so fair.
Yet—mid thy sweet and scented bowers
I sigh for earth's fresh woods and flowers,
For our pure heaven of lucent blue,
For fields ashine with morning dew,
For song of birds in bosky dells,
And dear, familiar chime of bells.
From thee, my Queen, I must away—
Ah, Goddess, let me part, I pray !

But Venus with brows bent and sparkling eyes
Railed on her lover. "Hypocrite," she cried,
"Traitor and ingrate, hast thou won my love,
Enjoyed it to satiety, and wrung
The last wild throb of passion from my breast,
To cast me off in scorn, and seek on earth
For fleeting joys, mere shadows of the bliss
That here is freely and forever thine ?
Ah, nay ! my knight and minstrel, turn once more
To her who shared with thee her Heaven of love !

BELOVED, come ! See, here inviteth
A grot with Eastern perfume sweet.
A deity whom Love delighteth
Might choose with rapture this retreat
And here on softest cushions lying
Thy limbs in languid ease shall sleep—
While scented airs are round thee sighing
With passion's fire thy blood shall leap.
Far off I hear a voice of sweetness calling
That bids me, softly on thy bosom falling,
With glowing looks mine arms about thee twine,

The Deliverance

And beg thee drink my lips celestial wine.
A feast of joy our feast of Love shall be.
Come, let us keep the glad festivity!
No shy and modest homage shalt thou bring—
To Love's own Queen, who crowneth thee her
King!

In vain, in vain upon his ears there fell
The passion fraught entreaty Once again
The harpstrings clashed, and thus Tannhäuser
sang

GODDESS of Love, in joy supreme and duty
Thy praise alone be ever sung by me!
Thou art the only source of Love and beauty
All gifts of grace and powers come from thee
The passion thou within my heart hast fired
For thee alone shall burn, a votive flame,
And gainst the world, undaunted and untired,
Henceforth I'll fight to glorify thy name.
But—back to earth I needs must fly,
Or here a slave must live and die!
For liberty for liberty
I thirst and yearn unceasingly
I long for battle, long for strife,
Yea, tho' it cost my very life,
From thee, my Queen, I must away—
Ah, Goddess, let me part, I pray!

Go madman, go! [she cried. Infatuate fool!
Thou traitor see, I stay thee not! Away!
The lot thy heart is pining for be thine!
Hence! Seek again the heartless race of men,
Whose bigot gloom and solemn shamefastness
We, deities of light and joy, have fled,

Sacred and Profane Love

To warm us in the lap of Mother Earth.
Away, thou fool ! and thy salvation seek—
Forever seek, to find it nevermore.
Full soon, I trow, will pride desert thy soul !
I see thee humbly creeping back to me—
In lowliest contrition see thee come—
To supplicate once more my magic power.
And shouldst thou not return—so shall my curse
Light on the universal race of man.
Then vainly seek the miracles of Love !
The earth shall be a desert—heroes, slaves !
But no ! Thou wilt return. Return once more ! ”
“ Ah, Goddess,” cried the Knight, “ the hour is
come.

Thy lover flees thee, and for all his life
By prayer, by penance, and by purity
He must atone for sin.”

“ O fool,” she said,
“ The sins men sin with me are ne’er atoned,
For never can the heart repent of them.
Henceforth upon this breast is all thy Heaven.
Salvation’s door is closed to thee ! ”

“ Not so,”
Tannhauser cried, “ while Mary lives and reigns !
Mary, deliver me ! ”

A sudden shriek
Broke from the lips of Venus at that name.
One moment each on each they glared—then shook
The earth beneath a thunder-peal, the knight
Saw all the misty landscape melt and whirl
About him, thro’ the tumult and the din
Saw for a moment yearning eyes that gleamed
And tossing arms. Then on his dizzy brain
Darkness descended, and he knew no more.

Part III · The Reunion

SWEET with the wholesome odours of the
field
Blows thro' the blooming vale of Eisenach
The wind of spring. A shepherd boy who
leads

His flock adown the mountain-side in joy
Carols aloud a hymn of praise to Her
The Northland Goddess of the Earth, whose might
Clings not to caverns, loves the sun and rain,
Scorns sensual sloth, and knows no wizard spell,
But thrills the heart with every breath of spring,
Opens the flower, awakes the questing bee,
Drives the swart ploughman with his team afield
Quickens the womb of Earth, makes, in her hour,
Of each ripe maid a shy divinity !
And fires in dreaming youth the heroic heart
To deeds of high adventure. Thus he sang

BOLDA, the goddess from under the hill,
Came flitting by forest and lea
With the music of birds and of murmuring rill
And the blooming of flower and tree.
I was dreaming a dream, so wondrous fair
Of her silver robes and her golden hair—
And when I awakened, the Spring it was there !
The sun shone warm with a cloudless ray
It was May once more ! It was beautiful May !
So now I go singing and singing amain,
Sweet May sweet May, she is coming again !

Rapt in his joy of heart the lad passed on
Nor marked where lay beside his path a knight

Sacred and Profane Love

Whose right hand held a harp. As one in death
Prone did he lie, beside a flowery brake,
Yet ere the gay notes of the song were stilled
He woke, and raised his head, and drank them in;
And such a look within his haggard eyes
Dawned, as in one that wakens from a dream
Of terror and despair, and sees the world,
The dear, familiar world, about him still.

Fair was the scene on which his waking eyes
In doubt and wonder looked. Across the vale
Frowned with its nodding pines and dark ravines
The Horsel Mount, but where the minstrel stood
Among the flowery meadows, a broad stream
Flowed gleaming from the sunrise, overarched
By the dim bridges of a distant town,
Above whose crowded roofs and glittering spires,
Mid beech and chestnut woods embowered, arose
The Wartburg's battlements and clustered towers.
Like some fair scene a painter limns on gold,
Against the dawn were ranked those silent towers,
Vaulted above with blue, while twilight-dusk
Yet lingered in the vale. Entranced he stood,
Gazing like one who reaches suddenly,
Nor yet believes it reached, some toilsome height
Whence he beholds his homeland—or the sea's
Blue shimmer, such as Grecian voices hailed
On that high ridge of Pontic Trebizond.
Then, like Aeolian music, far and sweet,
Arose a solemn chant—and soon drew nigh
A pilgrim train, marching with steadfast step
And happy faces southward set to Rome.
And while they went, with voices deep and
grave

The Reunion

That hushed the morning music of the birds,
They sang the solemn Hymn of Pilgrimage

TO Thee, to Thee, my steps I bend,
O Jesus Christ, the pilgrim's Friend!
O Virgin pure, to thee I pray
For blessings on our weary way
Too heavy heavy was my sin,
I could no longer bear its load,
No other peace I wished to win,
But chose the pilgrim's toilsome road,
And at the Festival of Grace
Will humbly soon myself abase
For he who steadfast faith attains
By penitence salvation gains.

The voices ceased, and once again was heard
Soft fluting, mingled now with silver chimes
From pasture-seeking kine A herdsman came,
But stayed his pipe, and stood aside to note
The pilgrims passing up the stony way
And gave them rustic greeting reverently
"Good luck, good luck upon your way to Rome!
And tell a bede, I pray for my poor soul."

Where neath a spreading oak anigh he stood
The wanderer heard the simple greeting given.
As sweetest music sank into his soul
Those humble words of faith. With eyes downcast
As one by some great sorrow bowed, or shame,
He spake in accents low with trembling voice
Almighty God, to Thee be thanks and praise—
Great is Thy mercy—great and marvellous.
And then once more that solemn chant arose

Sacred and Profane Love

TO Thee, to Thee, my steps I bend,
O Jesus Christ, the pilgrim's Friend !
O Virgin pure, to thee I pray
For blessings on our weary way.

They passed, and fainter thro' the coppice rang
The grave, deep chant of penitence and prayer ;
While still as bowed with grief he stood, his lips
Remurmuring to himself the words they sang :

AT Rome's high Festival of Grace
I'll humbly soon myself abase ;
For he who steadfast faith attains
By penitence salvation gains.

Now faint and ever fainter on the air
Was borne the chanting of the pilgrim band.
Like ever-widening ripples died away
The voices into silence—and the birds'
Soft notes began again—but ceased ; for, hark !
The sound of many voices ! merry tones
Of lute and song' and down the Wartburg's
slopes
Descending came a joyous company,
Hermann the Landgraf, fair Thuringia's lord,
With many a knight and minstrel. As they
neared,
In wonder spake the Landgraf, for he marked
That lonely stranger : " Friends, who standeth
there,
Lost, as it seems to me, in deep devotion ? "
" Doubtless a penitent," said one. " And yet,"
Answered another bard, " methinks he seems
Accoutred as a knight"; and silently

The Reunion

All gazed in wonder Then a sudden cry
Broke from the lips of one "'Tis he ! tis he !
'Tis Heinrich ! and another and another
Cried, Heinrich ! Scarce I dare to trust mine
eyes.

" Thou, Heinrich von Tannhäuser, thou ? ' amazed
Exclaimed the Landgraf " What ! Thou com'st
again

To seek us—us, thy friends, whose company
Thou didst forswear with such disdainful
pride ! '

' Aye, tell us all ! What meaneth this return ?
Grimly spake Biterolf , and all the rest
In gentler accents echoed, " Tell us all !

Then Biterolf spake further ' Art thou come
To offer peace or to renew the strife ? '
But he, still rapt in thought, as though he heard not,
Stood silent, answering naught. Then Walther
spake,

Knight of the Vogelweide, singer sweet
Of many a strain of love and love's delight
Com'st thou again to us as friend or foe ? '
But still he answered naught and doubtfully
They waited, gazing wondering more and more,
While with brows bent and downcast eyes he
stood

As dazed with sudden sunlight.

Then he raised
Eyes full of yearning love, and gazed on them
Smiling and Wolfram joyously exclaimed—
Wolfram von Eschenbach, that loyal heart—

Nay nay what need ye ask ? Is such the mien
Of proud disdain ? Brave Singer, welcome !
welcome !

Sacred and Profane Love

Too long, alas ! thine absence we lament."
" Welcome," re-echoed Walther, " if indeed
Thou com'st in peace." And Biterolf in tones
More grave, but full of deep sincerity,
Addressed him, saying · " I too welcome thee,
If true it is thou deemest us thy friends."
And all the other minstrels, pressing round,
Cried : " Welcome ! welcome ! welcome !"

Hermann spake .

" I also give thee greeting, friend. But say,
Where hast thou tarried all this lapse of time ? "

Then, all the sunlight fading from his eyes,
With broken voice Tannhäuser made reply .

" Far, far from here those lands in which I
wandered,

And far from here the goal which now I seek.

Ask not ! I come not here to strive with you.

Forgive the past, my friends—and let me go ! "

But Hermann grasped his hand. " Not so ! " he
cried,

" We have thee now once more. Thou shalt not
leave us."

A moment then he stood irresolute—

Then o'er his eyes again swept sudden gloom,

As when athwart the blue a thunder-cloud

Comes sailing ever nearer, silently,

Then of a sudden o'er the noonday sun

Its veil of darkness draws , the song of birds

Ceases, and grey the spectral pine-trees stand ,

Thus died away that momentary gleam,

And bitterly he spake : " Nay—let me go !

No more shall peace and happiness be mine ;

Ne'er may I hope to rest again on earth ,

My path is onward, onward endlessly,

The Reunion

And backward never must I gaze again.

Discomfited, perplexed, they mutely gazed,
While with bowed head, with faltering steps and
slow

He turned to leave them. Hopeless now they knew
Were all appeal and winged with silent sighs
The words they fain had spoken died away

But one amidst them stood with burning eyes
And lips that trembled, telling all that saw
Of some great conflict raging in his soul,
Yet in a moment all that agony
Had come and passed away Forward he strode,
Wolfram von Eschenbach, the bard of Love,
And laid his hand upon the other's arm.

Heinrich 'tis I, he softly said Behold,
Look in mine eyes and read my very soul.

Then Heinrich slowly lifted up his eyes
And lo a light, as when one dreams of Heaven,
Filled all his sight—and sweet as song of angels
Seemed floating on the sea a melody
That ever nearer came, as heralding
A vision of celestial happiness,
While Wolfram spake these words "Heinrich,
remain!

If not for love of us, for love of her—
Elisabeth!"

Then from the open heaven
Broke forth that radiance, and entranced he
stood,

Speechless. But suddenly as from a dream
Awakening, he cried Elisabeth!

Oh, name of sweet resistless influence!
But wherefore, O my friend, that name to me?

Sacred and Profane Love

"Heinrich," said Wolfram, "oft we vied in song ;
Now didst thou triumph over us, and now
Didst own defeat in skill : yet ah, one prize,
One prize there was, which none could win but
thou.

Since, by some passion driven, some inward
storm

That raged within thy breast—we know not
what—

Thou partedst from us on far wanderings bent,
Our dear Princess and patroness of song
To every minstrel lay has closed her heart.
She shuns our company, and evermore
We see her cheek grow paler day by day.
Shall I say more ? Oh, come ! return, dear friend,
And let thy voice with ours again be joined,
Then shall our festivals no longer miss
Her beauty's bright and starlike influence."

With look exalted, as a soul elect,
Tannhäuser stood. "O God," he cried, "is this
My expiation ? Have the pain and toil
Through which I faintly hoped to win Thy grace
Turned all to bliss, divine, ineffable ?
Such bliss as souls, ah, worthier far than mine
Had gone thro' fire to win !" He turned to
where

The Landgraf stood, and on his knees before
The aged lord, "My Prince," he said, "if I
Again may be thy servant and thy knight,
Thy singer and thy friend, behold me here !"
Then shouted all the minstrel band for joy,
And Hermann spake . "Be this a festal day
Our friend's return to celebrate ! My daughter

The Reunion

Shall crown the victor in the strife of song
Heinrich, belike in those far distant lands
Where thou so long hast wandered, thou hast
learned

Some newer, sweeter nobler strain than yet
By our rude Saxon fingers hath been touched
Upon the Northland harp. Come then! the feast
Awaits us in my Wartburg's ancient Hall!"
So crying, "To the Wartburg! that gay band
Of knights and minstrels took the upward path,
And soon were lost among the woods. But one,
Wolfram von Eschenbach, with steps more slow
And sundered from that merry company
Moved like a man on whom some doom impends,
Some agony, for which his will unshaken
Must steel itself in silence and alone.

Part IV : The Strife of Song

A YEAR had passed since Hermann's lovely
ward
Had set her light foot in the Hall of Song
That from the Wartburg, with its win
dows tall,

Looks on the smiling valley But to-day
The silent bannered walls, the empty floor
Receive her, flushed and eager as she comes
Alone, to greet the well loved room where joy
Sprang in her heart, and pitifully died,
And springs again the keener for that pang
"He comes again!" she murmured. "Oh, once
more

These walls shall ring with music from his hand!
Yea, even now their treasured melodies,
Their silent echoes of the strains he made,
Do beat upon my heart, that dared not hear them
While yet it seemed that he should come no more.

⓪ **HALL**, so dear for his dear sake
I greet thee, all beloved room!
His songs in thee again shall wake,
And rouse me from my night of gloom.

When from thy midst he vanished
How drear it seemed to me!
All peace from me was banished,
And joy deserted thee.

Even as she spake, a footfall at the door
Sounded she turned her head her knight stood
there.

Sacred and Profane Love

A moment more, and, kneeling, he had bent
His proud, dark head above her trembling hand.
"Elsabeth!" he cried—but dark remembrance,
Mingled with eager passion, choked his voice.
Then she "Ah God! arise and leave me Go!
This is no place for you to kneel. This Hall
Was once—is still—your kingdom. Rise, I pray
you.

I am glad that you are come thus safe and well.
Where have you tarried from your friends so
long?"

He rose; and from the window where they
stood

Saw on the summer sky far down the vale
A frowning ridge of pine-clad mountain rise,
Then bent on her a look inscrutable,
And spake "Ah, lady! ask me not. I come
From far-off lands. A dark oblivion
Hath drawn itself 'twixt Yesterday and Now.
Naught know I, naught remember, save alone
That ne'er I thought to see thy face again."
"Then what," she murmured, "brought thee
here once more?"

"A miracle!" he cried, "a miracle!
Wondrous beyond all telling. O sweet lady,
Grief, and impatience, and a seething heart,
These drove me forth. I dared not hope to win
What most I prized, and here, in daily sight
Of thee, dear lady, never could renounce
Oh, give me hope, or send me forth again!
Without thee I am lost, yet better far
To fling myself into the storms that rage
Beyond these quiet halls, than here endure
The torment of thy beauty"—

The Strife of Song

Oh, forbear!

Heinrich, she cried, "thy words are strange
and wild.

No Helen am I with a face to madden
The hearts of men, and cloud their eyes to God.
He made me as I am, a mortal maid—
And if His miracle have brought thee hither
That miracle I bless! With all my heart's
Profoundest gratitude I bless it. Ah!
Forgive me, pray—I know not what I do
Methinks I dream and like a foolish child,
Or still more foolish, unresisting bend
Before the might of some strange influence.
I scarce do know myself I cannot rede
Without thine aid this riddle of my heart.

WITHIN this Hall to minstrel lays
I listened, many a year
And songs of love and songs of praise
Seemed pastime sweet to hear

But, ah, what new mysterious feeling
Your songs awoke within my heart!
Now through my soul seemed anguish stealing,
Now sudden passion seemed to dart.

Yea, feelings which my heart had banished
And longings ne'er before confessed!
All maiden joys were dead and vanished
And nameless rapture filled my breast.

When you no more with us would linger
All peace and pleasure fled away—
The strains of every other singer
Seemed but an idle, empty lay

Sacred and Profane Love

I slept—my dreams were pain and grieving:
I awoke—'twas dark despondency
All sweet content my heart was leaving—
Heinrich ! what was't you did to me ? "

Then surged within his heart the tide of joy
Tumultuous, and as his spirit soared
Upon the height of that ecstatic hour,
Broke from his lips an answering cry of song :

THIS thank the God of Love for bringing,
The God who touched the strings for me !
He spake to thee in all my singing,
And He hath brought me back to thee.

Oh, blessèd be the gracious Power
That brings such tidings sweet and dear !
And blessèd, blessèd, be the hour
Wherein thy words of love I hear !

Again I see the world around me ,
I long to live—to live as thine—
Yea, life and love again have found me,
And all their wondrous joys are mine !

Clasped in each other's arms the lovers stood,
For one brief moment. Pure and perfect joy
They tasted then—until the world broke in,
And with it came the Doom Laughing it came,
With tripping of innumerable feet
And rustling robes bedecked with festal gold
The cry of silver trumpets went before,
The clash of cymbals and the throb of harps
Swelled with the coming of the happy throng

The Strife of Song

That poured along the stately corridors,
And with the pomp the colour and the pride
Of that far-off magnificent, joyous time
O'erflowed the Hall of Song Upon a day
The Landgraf Hermann stood, and as the crowd
Fell silent at his upraised hand, he spake

Lords of Thuringia, ladies fair and minstrels
To-day we hail with gladness the return
Of that bold singer whom unwillingly
Our halls have missed so long To welcome him,
A Festival of Song have we ordained.
Rich the reward—no bard in fair Thuringia
For such a guerdon ever did contend
What minstrel in this strife of song shall win
Your favour and as victor be acclaimed,
On him my niece, your Princess, shall bestow
This prize—Whate'er he will let him demand,
And if it lie within my power I pledge
My word that he shall have his heart's desire.
Now I declare the theme to which, in order,
As falls the lot, ye shall address your art.
Which of ye all can best expound in song
Love's inmost meaning and essential grace—
His be the prize! So noble singers, on!
Set hand to harp and think upon your loves!
And, be assured, albeit one alone
May win the prize, yet we to each and all
Who for our solace join this gentle fray
Do render equal thanks. So spake the Prince,
And when his words were ended, forth there
stepped
Four pages who among the minstrels went,
And in a golden bowl bade each man drop
His written name. Before Elisabeth

Sacred and Profane Love

One laid the folded lots—she drew—the page,
Reading the name it bore, proclaimed aloud :
“ Wolfram von Eschenbach, begin the Strife ! ”

Then Wolfram rose, and struck his harp, and
sang :

WHEN round I gaze upon this throng so
gracious,
What wondrous sight doth make my heart to
glow ?

So many heroes, gallant, brave, sagacious,
A grove of mighty oaks that proudly grow !

And like a wreath of sweet and lovely flowers
I see around me noble dame and maid—
That sight of splendour dazeth all my powers ,
My song is hushed—my harp aside is laid.

But, lo ! amid this dazzling constellation
A softer radiance, like the Evening Star !
Here sinks my soul in prayer and adoration,
And feels its gentle influence from afar.

As if before a fairy fountain kneeling,
My spirit in its lucent depths doth gaze,
And draweth from its waters draughts of healing
Wherewith my heart its burning thirst allays.

Ah, never, Fount, most innocent and holy,
Shalt thou be troubled by an impious hand.
My love is self-denying, pure, and lowly,
To serve and suffer is its sole demand !

Nobles ! in this my song my meaning see—
The essence of true love is Purity !

The Strife of Song

Then sweetly knights and ladies each to each
Murmured their praises while some inly smiled.
But on Tannhäuser's brow as Wolfram sang
Impatience gloomed, his thoughts went darkling
back

To when he learned the lore of Love, and pale
And bloodless, lacking the rich stain of life
Seemed to him now the pure, high strain he heard.
He grasped his harp and words that seemed to
rise

He knew not whence, came pouring from his lips

MAY Wolfram, what thy song inspires
Is nought but love's pale effigy!

If thus we pine in vain desires

A desert soon the world will be.

To God alone be prayer and homage given!

Behold His stars! Behold His boundless
heaven!

Adore such marvels high and strange

That lie beyond your reason's range!

But what doth yield to your embraces,

What lies the heart and senses near,

What tenderly with yours enlaces,

A human body sweet and dear—

This waketh passion beyond measure

And love is passion—love is pleasure!

No praises now were heard—silent and thrilled
The great assemblage sat. Elisabeth,
Wide-eyed, bewildered, gazed upon her knight.
But Blüetolf the fierce and arrogant,
Rose with a clash of ringing chords, and sang
In accents harsh his rude, imperious strain

Sacred and Profane Love

WE, one and all, hurl thee defiance !
Who could be silent, hearing thee ?
Though mad with haughty self-reliance,
Hear me, blasphemer !—also me !

Doth love divine my soul inspire ?
To quell my lady's slanderer
My sword leaps out—my heart's on fire—
My very life I give for her !

For love of woman pure and noble
My sword I'll ever gladly draw.
Thy wanton lays and joys ignoble
Are cheap and vile—not worth a straw !

“ O grey old wolf,” Tannhäuser cried, “ dost
thou

Presume to sing of love ? What canst thou know
Of love's delight ?—in truth not worth a straw ! ”
Thus taunt on taunt on Biterolf he hurled,
And soon the Hall with clamour rang—the knights
And spearmen of the Landgraf crowded in
Where Biterolf's bared steel above the throng
Flashed, as he strove to reach his foe , who stood
Unmoved and pale, with eyes that seemed to
look

Beyond the living world on things unseen.
Then soared above the din a voice that hushed
Its stormy waves—'twas Wolfram's, and he
sang .

DEAR God, I pray Thee now inspire
And consecrate my heart and song !
Afar be sinful, low desire
From all this pure and noble throng !

The Strife of Song

O Love, divine eternal,
My song shall thee extol,
Who, clothed in light supernal,
Hath visited my soul.

To guide me thou wast given
I follow thee afar—
Thou leadest me to Heaven,
Where ever shines thy star

Then rolled applauseive thunder round the Hall
But like a man distraught or demon-driven
Tannhäuser sprang before the Landgraf's throne
Wild were his looks and wild and strange the
notes
That, fraught with rapture sweet yet horrible
Broke on the silent, awed revolted throng

GODDESS ! To thee my soul hath vowed her
duty

Thy praise alone be henceforth sung by me !
Thou art the only fount of love and beauty
All gifts of grace and favour flow from thee.
Who thee in passion's rapture hath embraced
Hath learned the joys of love none else can
know
Poor fools, who love have never dared to taste,
Go—seek it in the Hill of Venus—Go !

As suddenly from out a thunder-cloud
Leaps the red flame—and for a moment all
Is silent,—then with the terrific peal
The solid earth is shaken—so flamed forth
That word of horror, and a silence fell

Sacred and Profane Love

While motionless, as Gorgon-struck to stone,
All gazed upon the singer standing there
Defiant. Then like sudden thunder crashed
Their voices' "Hearken to the traitor! Hark!
'Tis in the Hill of Venus he hath dwelt!
Away with him! Death to the sinner! Death!"
Thus cried the men, and all the women rising
In pale confusion cried, "Away! away!"
And thronged toward the doors, while high and
higher
The fury of the storm of outcries rose,
And ever nearer round that silent man
(As round the lover of Eurydice
The Thracian Maenads) raged the madden'd
crowd

WE heard it! heard his lips proclaim
That fearful sin—that cursèd name!
Ah, shame, to share the joys of Hell
And in the Hill of Venus dwell!
Foul sin, accursed for evermore!
Smite him, and bathe your blades in gore!
Smite, smite the outlaw, smite amain,
And hurl his soul to Hell again!

He gazed as though he saw them not, his eye
Filled with strange light, while ever nearer
gleamed
The pitiless bright steel One moment more,
A blade had flashed into his heart—but hung
Suspended, motionless . . . then slowly sank,
Sank ever slowly downward for behold,
Facing the murderer, with flashing eyes
And arm uplifted, stood Elisabeth.

The Strife of Song

There fell a sudden hush then Hermann
spake

Ellisabeth! What means it? Thou!

Dost thou

A modest maiden shield so foul a sin?

"Oh stay! she cried. "Or smite, if smite ye
will,

Me! Naught I reck of death. Your steel
can strike

No wound so deadly, none, as he hath struck.

Astounded at her words another spake,
And then another—till a tumult rose
Of many voices Daughter of the land
What mad infatuation seizeth thee,
Thus to avert the punishment from one
Who also thee so terribly betrayed?"

"I think not of myself she said. "Of him
I think, and his salvation Would ye work
His soul's eternal ruin? Nay, they cried,

'Tis he himself hath ruined it! His soul
Is lost forever—every hope is dead—
The curse of Heaven hath struck him Let him
go!

Let him be hurled with all his sins to Hell!

With gleaming swords uplifted once again
Forward they pressed. But calmly fronting
them

'Back! back! she cried "Tis not for you to
judge!

Have you no hearts? Down with the savage
sword!

And learn from me the gracious will of God!

Sacred and Profane Love

THE wretch whom Satan's wiles ensnare,
Whom magic charms of Hell enchain,
Must he forgiveness aye despair
Through penitence and grief to gain?

Ye call Belief your strength and stay,
And yet God's will ye falsely view,
Ye take the sinner's hope away—
What evil hath he done to you?

Behold the maid whose happiness
He plucked—to cast away again!
I gave him (yea, I will confess)
That heart he broke in light disdain.

And yet I beg that he may live
And yet atone for sin and pride,
Till faith at last assurance give
That e'en for him the Saviour died."

While yet she spake—while yet the gracious
words
Still lingered lovingly upon her lips—
Behold, the man who proudly there had stood
In fierce defiance of his murderers,
Was kneeling at her feet and murmuring
Words of abasement "God be merciful!
O God, forgive my madness and my sin!"
Then Hermann spake "Madness indeed, and sin!
She came, as 'twere an angel sent by Heaven,
To save thee, dastard! And, behold, she begs
The life of him whose treason dealt her death
Ah, shameless traitor! . . . Yet—though never-
more

The Strike of Song

Such crime can I forgive—to disobey
The message God hath sent by her I dare not

And, ever humbly kneeling, spake again
That other looking upward, as in prayer

A MESSENGER so pure, so gracious
From Heaven to save my soul was sent
And yet with thoughts impure, audacious
My sinful eyes on her I bent.

O Thou whose mercy sent for my salvation
Thine angel down from lucent heights above,
Forgive me! Save my soul from Hell's damna-
tion!

Ah God! let penitence Thy pity move!

He ceased, and all were silent. Then once
more
The Landgraf Hermann spake
A foul, dread crime
Hath been committed. Hither unto us
A thrice accursed son of sin hath stolen
In crafty false disguise.

Now listen, traitor!
We cast thee forth from us. Thou shalt with us
No longer stay. Polluted is our hearth
By thee, and Heaven itself frowns threateningly
Upon this roof that shelters thee too long
And yet wilt thou escape from woes
eternae,

One road still open stands. I cast thee out,
But point thee thither. Use it! Save thy soul!
From all the provinces beneath my rule

Sacred and Profane Love

Are gathering many pilgrim penitents
Already have the elder southward marched,
But companies of younger pilgrims still
Encamp within the vale of Eisenach.
To Rome's high, sacred Festival of Grace
These pious men are drawn by penitence,
Because their hearts no other peace can find,
Disquieted perchance by sins of which
The worst were holy deeds compared with thine.
Wilt thou with these to Rome make pilgrimage,
Unto that city of the grace of God,
And there do penance in the dust, and bow
Humbly before the judgment-seat of him
Whose voice is God's—and promise to return
Never, if he refuse to give thee blessing—
Then go !”

And all the others echoed, "Go!"
 "Yea," said Elisabeth, "and all my life
 Shall be a prayer that God forgive his sin,
 And bring him back from darkness unto light."

From where he knelt before her, suddenly
Rising, he gazed one moment in her eyes,
Then turned, and cried aloud, "To Rome! To
Rome!"

And quickly passing thro' their midst, was gone,
While from the valley floating upward came
Faint echoes of the chant the pilgrims sang.

" . And at the Festival of Grace
Will humbly soon myself abase,
For he who steadfast faith attains
By penitence salvation gains."

Part V The Pilgrim

IN the red western sky the autumn sun
Is setting, and the golden evenshine
Dies from the russet woods a paler gleam
Lingers awhile amid the sombre pines
And dark ravines of frowning Hørselberg,
While through the evening air come mingled
sounds

Of lowing herds and distant vesper bells.
Descending from the Wartburg's castled crag
Through chestnut woods and hazel thickets winds
A narrow path which soon doth lose itself
Within a glade that gently downward slopes
To grassy meadows and the valley stream
Here, nigh the border of the wood there stands
O'ercanopied by mighty boughs a fount
With moss-grown basin and anigh the fount
A little rustic shrine—from whence is viewed
The long white road that wanders thro' the vale
It is the hush of evening far and wide
Spreads the deep calm the vesper bell hath
ceased

No living creature seems to stir the leaf
Hangs motionless soft murmuring the stream
Glides past with darkening wave—when, list! a
sound

Of steps approaching Through the woodland
glade

A solitary man descends. He bears
The harp and raiment of a knightly bard
But stern and sorrowful his face—no more
The bright and happy mien of him who sang
Of love and joy Wolfram of Eschenbach.


Sacred and Profane Love

And now, as nigh the rustic shrine he drew
He stayed his steps, and gazed, and murmured
low:

"Ah, yes! I thought to find her here in prayer,
As oft before, when hither valley-ward
I wandered down the woodland slopes alone.
Yes, there she kneels, bowed down by anguish
sore,

Pierced to the heart, like Mary—and for him,
For him, that struck the blow, she intercedes!
Oh, wondrous and eternal power of love!
She watches here in hope from day to day
To see the pilgrims coming back from Rome.
And soon they should return. The woods begin
To lose their leaves. . . . And he? Will also he
Return with those forgiven penitents?
This is her only prayer and supplication,
And, O ye saints, I pray, fulfil her prayer!
Yea, though this wound of mine shall never heal,
Grant that her sorrow may be turned to joy!"

E'en while the words he murmured, distantly
A sound of many voices singing rose,
And ever louder swelled the joyous song

 HAPPINESS! again I come
To thy fair meads, belovèd home!
My staff may now aside be laid,
My pilgrim-vow to Heaven is paid.

My penance did forgiveness win,
The Lord hath pardoned all my sin,
The Lord to whom my songs resound,
My sorrows with His blessing crowned.

The Pilgrim

To souls repentant grace is given
They gain at last the joys of Heaven
And so I fear not Hell nor death
But praise my God while I have breath.

While yet the first faint music from afar
Came floating through the woods, she rose. With
eyes

Alight with sudden happiness, she scanned
The long white road that wanders thro' the vale
Tis they! she cried It is the pilgrim song!
Ye saints, oh, help me! Let me clearly know
The will of God, and whatsoe'er it be
Give me the strength to bear what must be borne.

Then soon beneath that little grassy knoll
With homeward hastening steps and joyous song
The pilgrim band came marching merrily
They came—they passed—and, as they passed
she stood

Gazing and all the light within her eyes
Faded away and died He is not come,
With quivering lips she said—then turned and
knelt,

And as a flower that bends before a storm
She bowed her head in silence—while again,
But fainter rose the pilgrims happy song

⓪ HAPPINESS! again I come
To thy fair meads beloved home!
My staff may now aside be laid
My pilgrim vow to Heaven is paid.

Then all again was still. Awhile she knelt
Amidst that utter silence lifting then
Her tearful eyes, with trembling voice she prayed

Sacred and Profane Love

ALMIGHTY Maiden, I implore thee !
Thou Virgin blest, to thee I pray !
While here in dust I kneel before thee,
Oh, take me from the earth away !
And like an angel pure and bright
Receive me in thy realm of light.

If ever foolish, fond desires
Have turned my heart away from thee,
If sinful thoughts that earth inspires
Have ever come and tempted me,
I battled then with anguish sore
Till from my soul the sin I tore.

Yet many a sin must be forgiven,
Since ne'er can I atone for all—
Oh, let me come to thee in Heaven
And as thy handmaid humbly fall
And kneel before thy holy throne
To pray for him—for him alone !

Again she bowed her head in grief and prayer.
And Wolfram reverently drawing nigh
Knelt there, and when at last she rose, his eyes
Sought hers entreatingly, for much he yearned
To speak some word of comfort—yea, the word
Trembled upon his lips. But silently
She passed and left him. For awhile he stood
As lost in thought, then stepping from the shade
Of the deep wood, he gazed around, and spake.
“ As the chill gloom that heralds death, the night
Comes creeping up the valley, and enfolds
Height after height within its robe of darkness,
The soul that yearns to reach that Heaven serene

The Pilgrim

Fears through the dark, dread shade to wing her flight.

But lo the loveliest of all the stars!

It sendeth down to earth its gentle light

To pierce the darkness and to light my way

From out this vale of gloom.

He spake but still

He lingered, gazing heav'nward. Then his hand

Sought for his harp and softly touched the strings

And as a bark o'er moonlit water moves

So moving on the music's silver stream

Floated with gentle rise and fall his voice

FAIR evening star so pure and bright
I greet once more thy gentle light.
Greet thou whene'er she pass the maid
Whom ne'er my constant heart betrayed,
When, soaring from this vale of sadness,
She joins the angels in their gladness.

He ceased—and softly down the darkened vale

The music died away But still he gazed

To where amid the glow of sunset hung

Like to a glimmering pearl the Star of Love.

Then with a sigh he turned away—and, lo

Above the serried pines of Hørselberg

Was rising, mid a silvery cloud, the moon,—

And all at once the long white valley road

Gleamed forth amid the darkness. Then he

marked

With slow and weary footsteps drawing near

A solitary man in pilgrim's garb—

For such it seemed, though rent and travel

stained

Sacred and Profane Love

And worn as if in mockery. Anigh
He paused, and like a man who sees once more
Some dear familiar scene, and doubtfully
Gazes around, still fearing lest he dream—
So gazing round him doubtfully he stood,
Then spake "I heard the music of a harp,
How sad it sounded! Sure, it cannot be
That she——" He ended not, but turned surprised,

For Wolfram spake: "Who art thou, wanderer
That wendest thus thy solitary way?"
"Thou bidd'st me tell my name," he answered.
"Well!

I'll tell thee thine instead—for thou art Wolfram,
The skilful bard "

"Heinrich!" the other cried,
Astounded "Heinrich! Thou! What bringeth
thee

Hither? Thou camest not with the pilgrim band
Of penitents forgiven. How dost thou dare
Thus unabsolved with desecrating foot
This soil again to press?" "Allay thy fears!"
Tannhäuser smiling said "Allay thy fears,
My worthy bard! I come here not to seek
Thee—no, nor any of thy brotherhood.
Yet some one here I seek—some friend to show
me

The road that once so easily I found."

"What road?" asked Wolfram, and Tannhäuser
cried

In bitter, reckless scorn "To Venus' Hill!"
"Ha! impious wretch, pollute not thus mine ear!"
Wolfram exclaimed. Then "Art thou thither
drawn?

Thither again? Ay verily! he said,
With a light laugh and thou shalt be my guide!
Thou knowst the path, I ween! 'Peace, mad
man! Peace!

The other answered. Horror seizeth me
Hearing thy words Where wast thou? Didst
thou not

Make pilgrimage to Rome? Then with fierce
eyes

That haggard, wayworn man a moment glared.
Speak not of Rome! he cried. And Wolfram
naked

With trembling voice Thou didst not then
attend

The Festival of Grace?

Silent he stood,

That wretched man, then spake in fierce low
tones

That ever higher louder fiercer rose

Well, Wolfram hear! Yea thou alone shalt
hear it.

But come not nearer for the very ground
Whereon I tread is curst. Stand back!—but
listen!

WITH fervour such as never penitent
Had felt before, the road to Rome I trod.
My pride of sin my arrogance was spent,
Healed by that messenger who came from God.
For her dear sake I donned the pilgrim's dress,
To sue for grace denied and pardon win,
That thus I might assuage the bitterness
Of all the tears wherewith she wailed my sin
All toils a fellow pilgrim's piety

Sacred and Profane Love

Might choose to suffer, seemed too light to me,
Whene'er he trod the yielding meadow-brink,
I sought with naked sole the thorn and stone,
Whene'er at some cool fount he stooped to
drink,

I quaffed the sunlight's fiery wine alone,
Whene'er in pious mood he knelt to pray,

I gave to God my blood as sacrifice,]
When in the hospice warmly couched he lay,
I made my bed amid the snow and ice.

With eyes intent her beauty not to see

As blind I passed thro' lovely Italy.

So unto holy Rome I came, and there

Upon the sacred threshold sank in prayer.

As morning brake amidst the bells' glad ringing,

While heavenly tones came floating from
above,

Burst forth in joy ten thousand voices singing

To greet the message of God's grace and
love,

Then him I saw to whom on earth is given

To speak as God. All knelt in reverence.

He gave them absolution. Thousands, shriven,

Arose exulting and departed thence.

Then I approaching him, with head low bowed

And signs of penitence, my sin avowed,

How evil passions did my heart inspire,

And longings which no penance had allayed,
I begged release from bonds that burnt like
fire,

And, wild with pain, for grace and pardon
prayed.

Then he whom thus I supplicated spoke.

The Pilgrim

Have godless passions, lusts of Hell
Won thee in Venus' Hill to dwell
Thou'rt damned to all eternity!
Sooner this staff on which I lean
Shall deck itself in tender green,
Than hope of grace shall bloom for thee.

Seized by despair I sank overwhelmed, con-
founded,
And swooned away, and when I woke, the
light
Was gone, and o'er the empty square reigned
night,
While from afar the pilgrims' songs resounded.
Then loathing and despair came over me—
This lying promise of felicity—
This pious song! My very soul it froze.
I shuddered then, as seized with madness rose
And fled—to seek the love, the joy once more
Which on Her bosom I had found before.

Yea, Venus unto thee, my Queen, I come!
Thy magic power shall my salvation be!
Thy realms of night shall ever be my home
Thine is my love to all eternity!

THROUGH accents of despair and fierce con-
tempt
Higher and higher the storm of passion rose
Triumphant. Fiercely from his eyes there flashed
A strange unearthly light—and Wolfram shrank
In horror hoarsely crying, 'Cease! Refrain!
Unhappy one, refrain!

But still the song

Sacred and Profane Love

Wild as the chant of Pythian priestess, rose
In tones of passionate, appealing love.

⓪ H, must I seek thee vainly, Goddess dear!
I found thee once so soon, so easily!
How all the world hath curs'd me thou dost
hear—

O sweet one, help me! lead me back to thee!
Ah! gentle, balmy airs around me move!
Hark! hear'st thou not the sounds of dance and
song
That call to revelry and joys of Love!
It is the nymphs', the Bacchant's' festal throng!

"Madman!" the other cried "Thou knowest
not
On whom thou call'st! Quick! Hither! Come
to me!
Or thou art lost forever! . . . How his breast
Heaves madly! . . . God! Some hellish influ-
ence
Is here at work, and fiends around us hover!"

But ever higher rose the impassioned song
Ecstatic raptures all my senses overwhelm,
When once again this twilight soft I see
Hail, hail, of joy and Love the magic realm!
Where once I tasted Love's reality!

And, hark! as siren-music sweet, a voice
Came floating like an echo from afar

Welcome again, thou fickle, faithless man!
Since naught thou find'st but pitiless disdain,

The Pilgrim

Naught but the world's contempt and pious ban
Thou long'st for love within mine arms again!

As when by holy Mary's image kneels
The suppliant, he lowly bowed and cried

O Lady Venus, pitiful and great,
I come to thee! Be thou compassionate!

Then softly floating like an echo came
Again the music of that siren voice

Art thou returned once more for love of me,
Forgiven be thy faithless proud disdain!
Deep founts of joy are thine eternally
For never shalt thou part from me again!

As touched by an enchanter's wand he stood
Trembling in silent rapture, slowly then
Outstretched blind hands that seemed to grope
their way
Toward a vision that his dazzled eyes
Scarce dared to look on—

Shuddering then but with
Undaunted heart, Wolfram before him strode.
Avaunt! he cried, ye Powers of Hell, nor
seek

To ensnare in your foul toils this spirit pure!
But he In vain in vain!—the doom of Hell
Is mine—then let its joys be mine as well!

O God Almighty! pleaded Wolfram's voice,
Be merciful and help his great despair
For Thou art greater than the human heart
And knowest that he loves Thee. Heinrich!
list!

Sacred and Profane Love

List but a word ! God's mercy yet will save
thee ! "

Thus gently pleading, on the other's arm
He laid his hand, Tannhäuser shuddered back
As from the touch of some cold, deadly thing
" Speak not of God or Heaven ! " he fiercely cried.
I have no God, no Heaven—but Her alone !
She calls me—yea, and I will go to Her ! "
" To Her ! " spake Wolfram. " Once for thee on
earth

An angel prayed, . . . and soon . . . yea, even
now

Perchance, she watches as a blessed spirit
Above thee. . . . Hark ! The solemn Requiem !
'Tis she . . . Elisabeth ! Her soul hath left
That suffering frame, and wings its way to
Heaven !

Thy angel kneels before the throne of God,
And thou art saved ! "

Even as he spoke the word
Came floating like an echo from afar
A bitter, piercing cry, " Ah me ! ah me !
Lost, lost, forever lost ! "—and died away
In wailings, while that requiem chant drew near
Beside the bier with slow and solemn step
The black-cowled Brothers paced, while side by
side

Knelt the two friends, and with a voice scarce
heard

For sobs Tannhäuser cried " Elisabeth !
O blessed soul in Heaven, pray for me ! "

Even as he spake, the long-tormented heart
Broke, and among the flowers he fell, where once
50

The Pilgrim

He heard the pilgrims chant, and in an hour
Heavy with destiny he turned his back
Upon the thorny path of penitence.
And now upon his fading senses broke
That chant again in glad, triumphant tones.
And Wolfram rising, marked with joy and awe
A homeward faring pilgrim band, who bore
A staff before them wreathed in budding leaves
And as they neared him, sang a wondrous strain

ALL hail to God's redeeming grace
That saves the sinful human race!
A miracle in holy night
He wrought to show His love and might!
The priestly staff all dry and dead,
With tender green hath blossomed
So for the sinner now may bloom
Redemption from Hell's fiery doom.
Seek out the man in every place
Who won this miracle of grace!
God over all the world doth reign,
And none His mercy may restrain.

"Too late, said Wolfram are ye come the
soul
Hath learned from other lips the grace Divine.
Upon the dead man's bosom reverently
They laid the budding staff the funeral train
Moved slowly onward. One frail form alone
The bearers carried from the Wartburg's gates,
But at the graveside did the priest devoutly
Commend with holy rites two souls to God.

Lohengrin

Part II • The Enchantment

I

TIS Dietrich, war lord of Brabant,
That on his death bed lies
But ere the voice of power is stilled
Or closed the eagle eyes,

O Friedrich, Count of Telramund,
My kinsman true, saith he,
Three things of price I had from God.
Now deal thou with these three,
As thou shalt hope in the Day of Days
Thy God shall deal with thee."

He spake and died, and Telramund
Was warden of the land
And the other jewels twain that Death
Had given into his hand

And one was Elsa, the white maid
The old Duke's daughter she—
And Gottfried one, the little brother
That played beside her knee,
Whom Telramund for his liege lord
Must serve in days to be.

Ortrud the witch wife from the North,
That was Count Friedrich's spouse,
She queens it now in hall and bower
And half distraught through pride and power
In her fierce heart she vows

Sacred and Profane Love

That on the throne of fair Brabant
No queen shall reign but she—
And many a wild dream haunts her brain,
And many a night in lonely pain
She broods on thoughts of blight and bane
And spells of wizardry.

II

IT is the spring-time of the year,
And out of the West there comes
A wind that ripples the reedy mere,
And the bird in the wild-wood carols clear,
And the brown bee hums,
And the heart is stirred as of men that hear
The rolling of distant drums.

Then the wild swans long for the reedy lakes
In the fair land of Brabant,
And sailing, sailing from the South
They seek their summer haunt,
And the air is loud with winnowing wings
And cries reverberant.

Into the woods one morn of May
To hear the small birds sing
The Princess Elsa takes her way,
And to her gown doth cling
The little brother, blithe and gay,
Who dances down the woodland way
And shouts for joy of spring

But Ortrud from her palace tower
She marks the happy pair—

The Enchantment

She has flung her gold comb to the ground
And loos'd her raven hair
She has flung her gold robe to the ground
And stripped her body bare

With fern seed juice from head to foot
She has stain'd her fair body
Then forth upon their track she goes
And never a soul might see
What turned the living air so cold
When she passed invisibly

O Elsa Elsa, where have you been
That you haste as if in fear?
Oh, I have been in the old oak wood
Beside the reedy mere

O Elsa Elsa, what have you seen
That turns your cheek so pale?
Naught have I seen naught have I seen,
But harken to my tale!

My little brother Gottfried went
To play in the woods with me
He hid him by a flowering thorn
And called in childish glee

That I should find him nevermore—
And so with playful pain
I sought him here, I sought him there
And meant to seek in vain—
Alas! and when I truly sought
I sought him still in vain!

Sacred and Profane Love

They have searched the wood from end to end,
But nothing could they see
Save here and again a little bird
That flitted from tree to tree.

They have called his name from side to side,
But nothing could they hear
Save the wild swans rustling in the reeds
That fringed the silver mere.

"O Elsa, Elsa," Ortrud cried,
"So fair thou art to see,
The fouler is thy hidden heart
With shame and treachery "

"Slain, slain hast thou thy little brother
That thou shouldst reign alone,
Or set thy secret paramour
Upon Duke Dietrich's throne "

Then Telramund bade seize the maid,
That she in bonds should lie
Until the hour when she should stand
Before the princes of the land,
And clear her name, or die

Part III . The Knight of the Swan

I

A GREEN hill mounts from the river's
edge
Where the Scheldt flows through the
sighing sedge.

On the hill top stands an old Oak tree
And spreads its towering canopy

A sacred place from ancient days
When all men deemed that in the maze

Of murmuring leaves and writhen boughs
An old earth mighty god did house.

Nor might, beneath that sacred shade,
Or wrong be done or falsehood said.

On that fair mead beneath the Tree
There stands King Henry of Germany

And round him many a Saxon lord
Leans on his long two-handed sword

Grim war-dogs, they that frowning stood
And thought on many a field of blood,

Where those brown, many-dinted swords
Had held at bay the heathen hordes,

While in Brabant these nobles gay
Who thronged the flowery mead to-day

Sacred and Profane Love

Hunted and hawked, and took small heed
Of Christendom's most bitter need

Thus, armed and angry in the land
Stands now King Henry, to demand

Why, of all Christian lands alone,
No banner of Brabant had flown

Against that surge of lust and hate
Where, at the empire's eastern gate,

Still master of the bloody sod
The German held the land for God.

II

MAKE answer, Count of Telramund,"
Thunders King Henry then
"Why hast thou sham'd, thou and thy folk,
The name of Christian men?"

Spake Friedrich Count of Telramund ·
"What tree shall yield thee fruit,
When a secret thing, an evil thing,
Is gnawing at the root?"

"In bonds doth Princess Elsa lie
For murder foully done
Upon her brother, her little brother,
Duke Dietrich's only son.
But no confession will she make,
And witness there was none

The Knight of the Swan

"And some would hale her to the stake
And some would speak her free—
And I fear me at each other's throat
Ere long our swords shall be—
The swords which thou wouldst have us draw
For honour and Christentie.

The King he sits beneath the Oak
And high above his head
The Shield of Justice he hath nailed—
Bring forth the maid, he said

Then forth the white maid Elsa came
With the spears on either hand,
And sternly to her spake the King
O Princess of the land

"By penitence shall blackest guilt
Be turned as white as snow—
Then standing in this holy place
Speak as thou stoodst before God's face,
If thou have sinned or no

A silence fell on the armed throng,
And silent stood the maid,
Nor looked she in King Henry's eyes
But gaz'd upon the summer skies
Smiling and unafraid.

But rapt and tender grew her look,
And then aloud spake she
O King a champion waits the hour
To take my part with godlike power
And my Deliverer be.

Sacred and Profane Love

" In dreams I saw him : silver-bright
His jewell'd armour shone.
His sword was as a beam of light,
His crest a silver swan.

" He is my Lord, he is my King,
And his till death am I.
And when the darkest hour draws on
I know that he is nigh."

Then spake the Lord of Telramund .

" Her brother she has slain,
And this will I with sword in hand
Against the world maintain

" I fling my gage upon the ground—
Blow, trump, and let us see
If shame shall prick her paramour
To dare the lists with me "

Then once the silver trumpet blew—
And all the throng was still.
And through the sedge the river sighed
That flow'd beneath the hill.

And twice the silver trumpet blew—
And each man seem'd to hear
The wild notes of a fairy horn
Make answer faint and clear

And thrice, oh, thrice the trumpet blew—
And then the silence broke,
For a shout went up from the listening crowd
Around the ancient Oak.

The Knight of the Swan

For a fair and wondrous thing they saw
Come down the sunlit stream—
And first far-off and indistinct
It shone, a silver gleam.

And then they saw a snow white swan
Come drawing down the tide
A little boat of pearly sheen
And a stately Knight that sat therein,
And seem'd its course to guide.

He steps on shore—he mounts the hill—
And to the Oak has won—
The sunlight on his silver mail
Flames back, another sun.

O stranger spake the wondering King,
"And art thou come to fight
For Princess Elsa and her cause?
Then God defend the right!

And if thou conquer thine she is,
And thou Duke Dietrich's heir—
But first thy name and noble race
'Tis meet that thou declare.

O King, made answer the strange Knight,
Of royal race am I
My father rules in a golden land
Beneath a fairer sky

But if this pure and guiltless maid
Will choose me to be hers
Here shall I reign until I die,
And thee in honour and fealty
Will follow to the wars.

Sacred and Profane Love

" Yet know that in that land of mine
Where her cry pierced to me
Are laws thou mayst not comprehend,
And things of mystery.

" To one alone may I declare
My name and whence I come—
This secret, if my bride shall seek
When I have borne her home,

" It must be told ! Yet in that hour
We part for evermore—
A vast, resistless, mystic power
Shall hale me from my bridal bower
And to my land restore.

" Elsa, wilt thou be faithful then ?
Is it enough for thee
To know that in thine evil day
I heard thy cry from far away,
And came to set thee free ? "

" Saviour and Lord," cried Elsa then,
" What reck I of thy race ?
Hide as thou wilt, tell as thou wilt,
The mystery of thy grace ! "

III

THE trumpets sound, the lists are set,
And neath King Henry's throne
Count Friedrich and the stranger Knight
Meet face to face, alone

The Knight of the Swan

The bright blades wave, the bright sparks fly
The champions tramp and reel,
And shrill and deadly rings the cry
Of steel on smitten steel.

But soon to earth is Friedrich hurl'd—
Unhelm'd and pale he lies.
King Henry starts up in his place
Now stay thy hand, he cries

Victorious Knight! Thy cause is won.
Now mercy do thou grant,
Who shalt to-morrow share a throne
With Elsa of Brabant!

The sword is sheath'd, the lists are down,
The shouting crowd breaks in
Loud around Elsa and her Knight
Goes up the merry din.

One look, one touch, one still embrace,
And the lovers pacing slow
Mid festal music and glad cries
Turn hand in hand to go
To where above the towered gate
The townsfolk all arow
Looked down to see the pomp go by
A thousand years ago.

Part III . Clouds at High Noon

I

DEEP falls the dark—the summer night
comes down
Trailing veils of dusky sweetness thro
the town.

One by one the stars appear large and bright,
One by one each latticed window veils its light.

Quenched the lights and still the laughter, only
yet

From the Duke's high palace windows open set,

Into the warm dusk a yellow radiance pours
And like surf the hundred throated revel roars.

Now beneath the palace window in the shade
Of a beetling-browed and serpent wreathed
arcade,

Outcast, shunn'd, behold in fury and despair
Telramund and Ortrud, crouching there.

Saith he ' Where is all thy wisdom woman?
Here we lie!

Elsa's is the bridal feast—ours the midnight sky

Murderess I maintain'd her on thy word—
Now my lot is blasting shame, a broken sword."

Ortrud hissed The fiend hath help'd her But
the end

Is not yet have faith a little, O my friend!

Sacred and Profane Love

" From this Thing of Faery if we wring his name
His shall be the fall, the flight, the bitter shame.

" From this Thing of Faery if ye chanced to hew
But a shred of skin, no more should ye view

" A knight in flashing arms, so proud, so gay,
But a wither'd carle, rheumy-eyed and grey.

" Many a knight is here, that scarce at God's
command

Would brook a nameless stranger ruling in the
land.

" Go ! Stir thy friends against the hour that bares
the sword.

Mine to work in Elsa's bosom with a poison-word "

In the gloom, there they plot, crouching low,
Summer stars across the night-sky sailing slow.

Summer sweetness, midnight freshness, round
them breathe—

Still the jealous, tortur'd hearts with rancour
seethe

II

TRUMPETS and drums !—the music peals,
The town is all astr—

The townsfolk throng the market-place

To gaze on Elsa's happy face,

And the King that walks with her.

Trumpets and drums !—and the noonday sun
Gleaming on silk and gold !

And many a famous knight is there

Whose pennon to the summer air

Is gloriously unrolled.

Clouds at High Noon.

The merry minstrelsy goes on
Toward the Minster door
The priest there and the bridegroom wait
There shall be said the words that mate
Two souls for evermore.

The bride she mounts the steps—but lo!
What figure fell and black
Between her and the door doth rise?
What voice of doom is this that cries
As in a wail the music dies—
Back, Elsa, turn thee back!

'Tis Ortrud. Shall this deed be done,
She cries, this deed of shame,
That the daughter of Brabant should wed
A man without a name?

Black sorcery hath ye in thrall
To work his wicked will.
But eyes there are he cannot blind,
Voices he shall not still.

Black sorcery hath brought him here,
And arm'd his evil hand.
What though he prate of kingly birth
In some far-distant land?

Beyond the pathway of the sun,
Midway twixt Heaven and Hell,
There lies the realm, nor God's, nor man's,
Where such as he do dwell.

"Theirs are the tolls that never end
The unfulfill'd desire,
The love that leaves the flesh and soul
Sear'd with its kiss of fire.

Sacred and Profane Love

" Theirs are the gold that turns to dross,
The dreams that shun the day—
Splendour of youth—the painted mask
Of foulness and decay.

" Bid him declare his name and race,
Then, Elsa, shalt thou see
What thing of horror waits the word
That makes him one with thee ! "

Pale stands the maiden, pale the King,
Nor hand nor foot can stir
But in the Minster gloom her Knight,
His silver armour gleaming bright,
Looks steadfastly on her.

" My lord, my Knight," she cries, " I come ! "
And suddenly in wrath
The King hath seiz'd the dark witch-wife
And hurl'd her from his path.

Then on into the church they sweep,
And the archèd spaces dim
Rang with an angel-war of sound
As rose the marriage hymn

Triumphant o'er the kneeling throng
The music stormed and soared ,
It fill'd the quivering walls, and out
At the high door it poured.

And from the listening crowd one prayer
Rose with that mighty chant
" May God in mercy send His grace
On Elsa of Brabant ! "

Part IV Wraiths of Eventide

I

SWEET summer day oh, sweetly
 close,"
Thus sang the maids, sang the youths of
 the bower—
All things that live now seek repose
Birds droop the wild wing in sleep folds the
 flower

All things the bright dawn sent roaming afar
Home turn when eve lights her first silver star—
Sheep to the fold come, the bee quits the clover
Child leans to mother and lover to lover

Home made for love fragrant and meet,
Here to your bride-chamber guide we your feet.
Bright things of day proud hearts and gay
 Trials and triumphs and toils, be at rest.
Here, Lord of War here, Beauty's Star
Night makes you one—oh, may Love make you
 blest !

II

ALONE, alone in the vaulted room
Where one lamp burned in the fragrant
 gloom,
Breast to breast stood the wedded pair
While the golden strain that had led them there
Died softly down by the castle stair

Sacred and Profane Love

The bright, hair of the maiden shone
Unbound below her loosen'd zone,
And the Swan Knight's armour, disarrayed,
A shining heap on a couch was laid,
And by it rested his battle-blade

"O Love," he said, "the dream was sweet
That drew me to these silver feet,
And still a dream it seems to me,
The call, the strife, the victory,
And the joy that is and that is to be."

Spake Elsa . "Far and far away,
What vision thrill'd us in one day?
Belovèd, by what hidden lore
Knew'st thou my need, my anguish sore—
Thou, on thy far, enchanted shore?"

"Enough that I knew," the Swan Knight said,
"Enough that to guard this precious head
The arm was strong, the heart was fain—"
But Elsa cried: "O bitter pain!
What if they call thee hence again?"

"They—they—I know not who nor where
Like a morning cloud in the fields of air
Thou cam'st in splendour, and even so
Shall the day yet come when I see thee go,
And fade from my sight like the sunset glow?"

"Oh, never, Elsa," the Swan Knight spake,
"Shall we be sundered, until thou break
The ban that lies on thee and me."
But Elsa cried: "How bitterly
Have I rued the pledge that I gave to thee—

Wraiths of Eventide

Never to know my husband's name,
As though the word were a badge of shame,
Never to know of what kin thou art,
In the years gone by to have no part,
Nor in one closed chamber within thy heart!

Pale, pale, he stood for a moment there,
In his eyes the dawn of a deadly fear
Elsa, he cried, I charge thee stay
Or ever the word of doom thou say
The fatal word that I must obey!

But Elsa laugh'd, and half distraught
Her lover to her breast she caught
This shape of flesh I can make mine own
Yea, mine forever and mine alone,
But the spirit roams in a world unknown.

What Powers soe'er that dare decree
I shall know not my love as he knows me,
I brave and defy them! Declare thy race,
Thy noble name and thy dwelling place,
And the issue be it in God's good grace!

Stark and aghast for a moment there
He gaz'd upon her in dumb despair
When they heard the tramp of a hurrying throng
That stormed those echoing halls along
That had echoed last to the bridal song

A shout, a crash, and the carven door
Lay shivered along the chamber floor
And there stood Telramund, sword in hand,
And behind him many a battle brand
And the tossing plumes of an armed band.

Sacred and Profane Love

But swift as a hawk hath Elsa flown
To the couch whereon the sword was thrown—
She hath thrust the hilt to the hand of her Knight,
And the blade sang clear as it leaped to light,
And the chamber rang with the roar of fight.

Then guards and knights came trampling in,
Till the King's voice thundered above the din,
And the weapons sank at the word he said,
But the brightest blade was bathed in red,
And on the rushes the Count lay dead.

Then silence fell for a little space,
As they flung a cloak o'er the traitor's face
And as they carried the dead away,
One drew a curtain, and cold and grey
Stole in the light of the breaking day

Then the Swan Knight spake, and his words they
fell

Like the far-off sound of a minster bell .

" O King, They call me—by set of sun
Far hence, far hence, must I be gone—
The troth is broken, the dream is done.

" At the river's edge, by the ancient Tree,
Once more I bid you meet with me.
There shall ye learn where my land doth lie,
And the name that neath this earthly sky
No child of earth must name me by."

As a flower by the scythe-blade Sundered
So Elsa sway'd her golden head,
So drooped, so fell at her lover's feet,
And a tide of oblivion, deep and sweet,
Still'd the wordless cry and the wild heart-beat.

Part V The Doom

THE King sits by the ancient Tree,
The slow stream flows beneath,
A light wind makes its ripples run
All twinkling in the noonday sun
Along the shining path.

And there are the lords of fair Brabant
And many a Saxon lord,
And Elsa by King Henry's side.
But pale and silent sits the bride
And waits her lover's word.

The Swan Knight stands before the King
In silver arms array'd.
Long, long he gaz'd on his lady's face
But never a word he said.
He gazed far up the shining stream
And bowed his helm'd head

O King," he spake, and nobles all
And his voice was stern and slow
Last night a traitor sought my life
I slew him in the whirl of strife—
Was this well done or no?

As on a windless summer night
A little breeze may swell
And whisper through a leafy wood
So through the throng that listening stood
The whisper ran "Twas well.

Again he spake Ye all have heard
The ban that on me lay

Sacred and Profane Love

How if I told my name and race
No longer I might stay,
And if my bride these things should ask
I might not say her nay.

"Elsa, and didst thou seek of me
These hidden things to know?"
And Elsa spake. "I sought the truth,
I sought it to my woe."
And then the trembling voice rang clear,
And the pale cheek 'gan to glow.

"I sought the truth, and still I seek,
With open eyes and free
That suffer not this blinding ban,
These bonds of wizardry
Yea, all in all or not at all
My lover mine shall be"

"O noble maid," the Swan Knight said,
"The thing thou speak'st to-day
It yet shall run like fire abroad,
To quicken and to slay.

"Aye, quick it is with the seeds of change,
With blessing and with bane.
But I deem a thousand years shall run
Or ever beneath the open sun
That word shall sound again.

"But when the suns of a thousand years
Have wrought the work of fate,
Then, then the blinded eyes shall see,
The fettered souls shall then go free,
And thou and I shall mate.

The Doom

Not yet not yet for half in Heaven
My father's kingdom lies
And none of his knights with men may dwell
And wear his own true guise,
Or like the stars at break of day
That kingdom should dissolve away
Lost in the unsearch'd skies.

Montsalvat is the name it bears
And there by God's decree,
The Lance that shed Christ's precious Blood
And the Cup that caught it as it flow'd
Are held in sanctuary

And servants of the Grail are we
Sped by its flaming sign
On many a strange and glorious quest
To North and South to East and West
Our names and whence we come unguessed
We work the Will Divine.

Now mark ye all the name I bear
And judge if I be worth
To match in blood and pride of place
The lordliest race on earth

A great King thron'd in Montsalvat
Guards all its precious store
His name far blown on winds of song
From shore to unknown shore,
Shall mingle with the dreams of men
Till men shall dream no more.

He is that Parsifal by whom
Earth's loftiest quest was won.

Sacred and Profane Love

And I, who wrought his bidding here,
Am Lohengrin his son
And now the tale is all but told,
The work is all but done

" O King, against the pagan hosts
I shall not ride with thee
Yet know, thine own good sword and these,
By God's invincible decrees
Shall have the mastery,
And stablish Christendom in peace
From the Ostmark to the sea.

" Forth then to war ! And ye, my folk,
O'er whom I ruled a day,
Seed of a King ye shall not miss
When I have passed away.

" Elsa, thy brother is not dead—
Changed by foul Ortrud's spell,
Shelter he found in Montsalvat
There, blithe and tended well,
He waits but the appointed term
Once more with men to dwell "

He spake, and neath his shadow'd brows
The river-face he scann'd,
And a cry went up from the listening crowd
That thronged about the strand.

For a fair and wondrous thing they saw
Come gliding down the stream—
And first, far off and indistinct
It shone, a silver gleam

The Doom

And then they saw a snow white swan
Come drawing down the tide
A little boat of pearly sheen
But none there was that sat therein
Or seem'd its course to guide.

With ruffling plumes it took the land
Beside it kneel'd the Knight
And tenderly his hand caressed
The stately head that sought his breast
And the snowy plumage bright.

From the white neck with murmured words
He loos'd the ring it bore,
The twisted ring of the beaten gold—
And as he leap'd to his feet behold!
The swan was there no more,

But in its place a blooming boy
Sprang up and swiftly sped
Till Elsa's arms were round him cast
And on his sister's tender breast
He hid his shining head.

But pale, oh pale, is Elsa's cheek
And wide her straining gaze
As up the glittering flood afar
She marks one moving silver star
Melt in the dancing blaze.

Then homeward all with all their joy
Their wonder and their tears!
And alone once more the ancient Oak
Its giant shape uprears
That saw the Celt that saw the Frank
That saw the Roman spears.

Sacred and Profane Love

Once more it looks on a grassy hill
That bare and silent lies,
And hears the wild swan call his mate
Across the empty skies,
And the river sighing through the sedge
As still to-day it sighs.

Parsifal

Part II The Coming of the Grail

A LITTLE while, O you who con this rhyme
Stand at my side, and watch the mists
of Time

Part, for a little while, and give to view
The red roofs of a town in old Anjou
That cluster round a lofty rock and steep
Whereon with broad blind walls and frowning
keep

An ancient fortress towers. Here once did reign
The good King Titurel, with his sons twain
The first named Gamuret, whose lust of fight
Was never still d the next Anfortas hight
Of whom are wondrous tidings still to say

The tale I tell is of an ancient day
Ere yet the sword of Charlemagne set free
From lawless strife and heathen savagery
That good land mother of great kings to come.
But lately from the dying hand of Rome
Had fall n the empire of the West so poured
From North from South a countless heathen
horde,

Raging for blood and spoil, and overthrew
Many a high throne, and many a prince they slew
Wasting the land and here alone the might
Of Titurel, the vallant plous knight
Still held them off though sore bestead was he
And round his walls they eddied sullenly

On the high tower that yet his banner bore
Behold the King, alone! The day is o'er—

Sacred and Profane Love

Of all the changing year that holiest day
When erst upon the Hill of Golgotha
HE hung upon the Cross, whose shame and death
Fill'd with great glory and immortal breath
The common clay of man. Above the King
His blazon'd banner on the winds of spring
Lifted and sank, nor did those breezes bear
Sweet odours of the spring-time to him there,
But bitter smoke from many a smouldering brand.
So Titurel gazed across the ravaged land,
And thought upon his troop encamped below,
Faithful to death, but sorely wasted now—
The one slight shield that warded yet from harm
That little world of tower and town and farm.
Then, lifting to the stars a face that ne'er
He showed, except to Heaven—so like despair
Was the wild look upon his tortured brow.
"O God," he whispered, "we are lost, if Thou
Send us no help in this extremity,
For past all hope of human aid are we.
Thy will be done Thy cup of mortal pain
Shall we who bear Thy sign refuse to drain?
But weak are we—scarce one unwounded knight
Followed my pennon from the last great fight
Lord, if Thou send no succour we must die!"

Deep silence fell, the winds were hush'd, the
sky
Laughed with innumerable lights, and awe
Crept about Titurel's heart, for now he saw
One trembling Star begin to move and grow,
Expanding to a misty globe, that slow
Descending, near and nearer, seem'd to move
To swelling music, till the vault above

The Coming of the Grail

Rang, all one rapturous cry At last it dwelt
On the stone parapet, whereby he knelt
Dumb with amazement and a wild suspense
And then a flood of perfume struck his sense
More sweet, himseemed, than ever did beguile
The wanderer sailing by an Indian isle,
As from their throbbing heart of silver light
The wreathing mists dissolved, and gave to sight
A cup of crystal, great and smooth and fair
Radiant amid the dusk it rested there
And as he stared on it in rosy flame
About its rim the shapes of letters came
And vanish d but he read them as they glow d
I am that Grail which held the Blood that flow d
For man's redemption on the bitter Tree,
And where I am are strength and victory

Judge now if words of mortal breath may tell
What wrought within the breast of Titur el !
What humble tears he shed what joy undream d
Flooded his heart ! The night wore on and
gleam d
A flush of gold above the eastern wood.
But ere the sun was fully ris n, there stood
That holy thing enshrined reverently
Within the castle chapel where to see,
To praise, and to adore, came flocking they
Who held themselves but dead men yesterday
But now before the Grail seem d every knight
Fairer and nobler in his fellows sight,
And all grew giant hearted with their lord.

And now the Grail with many a flaming word
Taught them from day to day what should be done

Sacred and Profane Love

Till all its hidden potencies they had won
For sick and wounded men before it laid
Grew whole and strong, and common wheaten
bread

Offered before it changed to flesh and wine
For each man as he would , and when the sign
For battle blazed upon its margin, then
Each knight rode mighty with the strength of
ten,

And bursting on the heathen hosts, they slew
And scattered far and wide that lawless crew,
Till once again the homely life of man
In that fair province its old course began
Safe by the cottage door the maids could spin,
Safely the hind could plough, and hope to win
A bounteous harvest, with three mighty friends,
Earth, Sun, and Rain, to help his honest ends,
And safely to the market once again
The great white oxen drew the heaped-up wain.

But not accomplished yet was all th' intent
Of this great sending , for there came and went
Still many a flaming message of the Grail,
And still they wrought its bidding without fail ,
While two pure maidens watch'd it night and day,
Noting with care each thing that it would say
And first the long-forgotten tale it told
How Arimathean Joseph, who of old
Had laid the Saviour in His rock-hewn tomb,
After long wandering, had found his home
Near to this spot , and so they search'd, until
Upon the east slope of a sun-kissed hill
They found a ruin'd shrine, all overgrown
With grass and weeds, wherein a great flagstone

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The Coming of the Grail

Among the meadowsweet and foxgloves lay
This with much toil and heed they moved away
And found the white bones of that Saint. And
there,
Wonder of wonders, was an iron spear
And on its blade wet blood. This was that Lance,
So ran the utterance of the Grail which once
The Roman soldier bore who pierced the Side
Whence flowed for love of man that mystic tide
And Titirel bore it homeward reverently

But stranger things their eyes were still to see,
And in new fields new victories to be won
For Titirel must leave to his strong son,
His eldest Gamuret, his burgh and lands
While young Anfortas with his father wends
And twenty chosen knights into the woods.
Long, long they rode mid trackless solitudes
Till by a lake, with ancient oaks ringed round
A stately castle, newly built, they found.
Above its gate was set in graven stone
A Cup with rays of light that round it shone.
On a broad banner blowing overhead
The same device glitter'd in gold and red.
None hailed them from the walls—in fear and
doubt
Long time they search'd that mystery about
But found not in the woods one living thing
At length they pluck'd up heart and entering
Across the bridge their trampling horse hoofs
rang
Nor did the iron barr'd portcullis clang
To bid them halt—no men at arms they saw
But all the court was vacant. So in awe

Sacred and Profane Love

They paced long corridors and echoing halls,
Saw silken tapestries upon the walls,
And carven pillars—all things fair and meet,
As though some dreaming king in this retreat
Had plann'd to build the lordliest home on earth,
But lit no fire upon the lonely hearth,
And left all empty to the wandering wind.

So here the good King knew the place assign'd
To be the Grail's high court and sanctuary.
And here they dwelt, that chosen company,
Sacred, mysterious, unapproachable
For all the forest ways were guarded well
By wildering enchantments, so that none
Could force his way to them, save he alone
Whom the Grail summon'd to its service high
Pure must he be of heart, in chivalry
Well nurtured, and on fire with ardour great
To right the wronged and set the crookèd straight.
And suchlike men were gather'd one by one
From every Christian land beneath the sun,
As came to each the high mysterious call
Thither he travell'd then, forsaking all,
Home, friends, possessions, woman's love—so
bade

The heavenly script, for only he might wed
Who ruled the Castle of the Grail, that so
From sire to son the line of kings might go
Thence on the missions of the Grail sped forth
Those dedicated Knights thro' all the earth
Unknown at many a martyr's side they stood,
O'er many a lonely deathbed held the Rood,
Or, sheath'd in steel and angry for the right,
They turned the tide of some disastrous fight,

The Coming of the Grail

Or oftentimes if in that iron age
Of passions dire, of fierce inhuman rage,
In bitterest need some hapless child or maid
Cried in great anguish for immortal aid,
Swept down to succour them a Shining One—
And ere the thanks were uttered he was gone.

Part III The Calling of Parzifal

HIGH noon it was, upon a summer day
By a low shelling where a forest way
Skirted a little clearing in the wood.
There, gazing down the path a woman
stood,

In aspect tall and noble, but arrayed
In homely garb as though a queen had strayed
From her high bower with common folk to dwell.
Grey haired she was with lined brow and well
In her deep eyes and in the weary strain
Of close shut lips you mark'd the signs which pain
And bitterness of heart had painted there.
Beside her stood a lad of twenty fair
And mighty thewed he was with eager eyes
That stared like hers but rapt with glad surprise
As from the forest gloom came into sight
Three horsemen, riding slowly each a knight
In war array Beneath the high sun's rays
That made from helm to spur a dancing blaze
They rode across an open glade, and then
In the dark forest disappear'd again
Breathless, amaz'd, with wet blue eyes and wide,
Mother hast thou beheld? the young man
cried

'Oh tell me, what be these? She turned her head
And in her eyes twas little joy he read,
But fear and hatred rather as she said
Angels, my son. I go he cried, to be
An angel like them, and then suddenly;
Fleet as a hawk, he darted on their track

Sacred and Profane Love

The day wore on, and still he came not back
But late at even, when she sat and span
Beside her log-fire, with one aged man,
Her seneschal when she was rich and great,
Now friend and guardian in her poor estate,
The low door darken'd, and there stood the lad.
"O Parsifal," she cried, "what fears I had '
Where hast thou roamed?" But in her arms, he
said

"Mother, I scarce can tell thee how I sped.
Listen no angels are these goodly men,
But knights of Arthur's Court—so said they ,
then,
'What is a knight?' I ask'd, whereat they smiled,
While one of them with lordly eyes and mild,
Lancelot, they called him, look'd me o'er and
o'er,

Then lighted down, and each thing that he wore,
His lance, his sword, he show'd, and let me feel—
Oh, joy !—the rough hilt of the long grey steel ;
And told me all the usage of each thing,
And how in service of their mighty king
They rode, he said, to war on evil men.

Sure none would dare withstand them, mother ?
And then

Some while I journey'd with them, till the sun
Was low, and still of great things to be done
They spoke, and Gawain told of a castle hidden
Deep in a wild wood, among ways forbidden,
Wherein a holy thing, the Grail, is stored,
For evermore protected and adored
By knights more glorious by far than they ,
And could one but behold it, from that day
Great joy were his, that tongue could never tell.

The Calling of Parsifal

And then they question d me, nor wist I well
To answer who my sire and kindred were,
Save that I dwelt within this wood, sith e er
I could remember and that now to me
It would seem Heaven to join their company

Again they smiled, and Lancelot bent his head
And looking musingly upon me said

With horse and lance and that stout arm of
thine,

And that high heart which some way I divine
Within thy breast thou yet mayst make a name
The world will not forget. And so I came
Homeward. And, mother see what I have
wrought!

With that he seiz d her by the hand and brought
The old man following to a paddock where
They housed at night time an old piebald mare
That drew the wood-cart and the lad had
framed

From twisted withes and sacking what he named
A tilting saddle for that sorry nag
A shield of wicker dangled on a peg
And from a holly tree, pointed and charred
A long spear he had fashion d and twere hard
For a strong man to lift that weapon rude,
But Parsifal swung it in his joyous mood
As twere a branch of rose or eglantine
Swayed by a maiden in her fingers fine.

Slow and without a word they turned them
home.

But in the woman s eyes a look had come
As had some formless, long impending Fear
Leapt in her path, and thunder d I am here!

Sacred and Profane Love

And long that night while Parsifal lay asleep
She and her aged squire their watch did keep,
And talk'd of what had been, and what should be.

But when the morning broke, and gloriously
About the forest ways in pools of light
The sunshine flickered, said that aged knight
To Parsifal, expectant "O my son,
That which hath chanced can never be undone
Fain had thy mother to this narrow plot
Bound in reposeful happiness thy lot
But Powers more strong than we have now un-
furled

The flag that thou must follow through the world.
Go forth ! And if thou wouldst be such a knight
As those thou saw'st go by in armour bright,
Then mark the rede I give, for even I
Was long ago of that fair company
Gentle be thou to all thou dost surpass
In strength or wealth—but in the narrow pass
Rough with thy foeman, keep thy plighted word,
Seek for no strife, but never sheathe thy sword,
Once drawn, till victory be thine, or death,
Stand by weak Right until thy latest breath,
Speak not too much, and question not at all
If aught of strange or grievous should befall
In any house where thou mayst be a guest,
To women all be courteous, but 'twere best
Until thou meet thy heart's true love, to deem
That what they are in sooth and what they seem
Are twain . . ." Then cried his mother bitterly
"This also is the way of chivalry,
If aught I know of it—that each fair dame
Thou chance to meet upon thy road to fame,"

The Calling of Parsifal

Thou kiss her lips O son of mine, even so
As Gamuret went, thy sire wilt thou too go?
Six brothers hadst thou—on the same wild way
They all rode forth to storm their lives away
Fierce lovers and fierce haters you might chain
The maddest wind that sweeps the Northern Main
Rather than curb the will of one of these.
Go then and what of joys or miseries
Thou meet upon the broad wave of the world,
And wheresoe'er upon its surges hurled,
Let this thought shine before thee like a star—
That thou be not as winds and waters are,
Vehement, restless uncontrollable,
But know thy path in life, and heed it well.
But what avails it? Thou wilt surely be
Even as God made thee, and I dimly see
That I have saved thee from the world till now
Not for myself as fondly I did trow
But for God's need of some pure strength like
thine
Somewhere somehow to work the Will Divine.
And tho' I ne'er may see thy face again,
I deem I have not borne thee all in vain,
Nor vainly in this solitude uncouth
For twenty years have woven about thy youth
The web of deep seclusion, rent to-day

Tears choked her voice—the gold head and the
grey
Mingled their locks, and in a long embrace
They held each other in that quiet place
Which one of them should see in life no more.
Then Parsifal kiss'd the old knight's hands, and
sore

Sacred and Profane Love

At heart with his first grief, but all athrill,
For in that aching heart there sounded still
Wild music, calling from a world unknown,
He mounted his rough steed, and forth, alone,
Into the shadowy woods he took his way ,
And all the glory of the summer day
Faded to twilight for that aged pair
With the last glimmer of his golden hair.

Part III : Kundry

BENEATH a may tree heaped with snowy bloom
Just where a white road runs into the gloom

Of a great forest, lo! a woman laid,
As though to shelter in that fragrant shade
While burns the noonday sun. Her rich array
And dark, disdainful beauty seem to say
That as befits a dame of high degree
By page and squire she should attended be.
Yet all alone she lingers there, and now
She peers along the road with shaded brow
And now returning, in the shade she lies
With outflung limbs and wide, impatient eyes.

At last the beat of horse-hoofs struck her ear
Hastily then she rose up from her lair
Shook from her robe the flowers and twigs that
clung,

And soberly with downcast eyes along
The sunny road she sauntered. Nearer still
The sound approached of trampling hoofs, until
Out of a shady hollow rose to sight
What seem'd to her at first a mounted knight.
Strange was the figure which amaz'd she viewed
As it drew near and nearer to the wood.
For arms he bore a crossbow on his back
A long, rough holly stake with point burnt black
Above his shoulder sloped. No sword he bore,
His golden hair was all the helm he wore.
A piebald horse he rode that wearily
Dragged its stiff limbs along, and seem'd to be

Sacred and Profane Love

For war or tournament but little meet,
Yet he that rode thereon was stark and straight
As a young oak-tree, and his fearless eyes
Met her dark glance in fair and knightly wise.

A moment each on each they look'd, and then
With bright'ning eyes, "Lady," he cried, "if men
Have done thee any wrong, that thus alone
I find thee straying, make thy grievance known
To me, I pray thee. Though as yet no knight,
My arm and lance are vowed to serve the right
And help the weak. Fair lady, let me be
Thy champion in the faith of chivalry!"

Smiling she answered "Were I in such plight
As thou dost deem, in sooth no better knight
Should I demand. But say, what seekest thou,
Far, as I deem, from home? And wherefore now
Leavest the goodly land of tilth and farm
For this grim wood, where things of fear and harm
Lurk from of old to wilder and waylay?"

"In truth," he answered, "'tis the fourteenth
day
Since last I saw the thatch'd roof of my home
My name is Parsifal, and I am come
By this road, God knows why—'tis one to me.
May some hand guide me that I cannot see
To where the towers of Montsalvat enshrine—
So certain knights have told me—a divine
And mystic thing they name the Holy Grail"

"Well met!" she cried. "I deem thou wilt
not fail,
For in these woods none better knows than I
The way to that inviolate sanctuary."

Kundry

With that he lighted down and soon they passed
Beneath the murmuring shadow of the vast
Mysterious forest, talking as they went.
And when the way was rough, her fingers leant
A moment on his arm—and now she drew
Her robe's hem higher from the scarlet shoe
Than she had need—a tender mocking tone
Made music in her voice, her dark eyes shone
With promises unspoken when they met
The light of his, that all unconscious yet
Gleam'd like the laughing blue of summer seas.
Then in her deep heart thinking what would please
Him most, she drew him of himself to tell—
His boyish deeds, his fancies, and the spell
Cast on him by the glorious Three, who rode
In glittering armour by his poor abode.
And last he told her of the fateful day
When he had fashioned all his rude array
And forth would ride to seek what he might find,
When suddenly there flash'd into his mind
His mother's wayward bitter speech, And see
Thou kiss upon the lips each fair lady
That thou shalt meet, and crying, I forgot
The ways of chivalry! Believe me, not
My will it was to leave one rite undone,
Then bow'd his head, and ere she wist, upon
Her scarlet lips he kiss'd her—She, amaz'd,
Recoiled a step and in her dark eyes blay'd
A flash of anger at the rude salute.
So each on each they star'd, a moment mute.
Then Parsifal—Have I offended? O
Fair lady twas not wittingly but so
They bade me greet each dame upon my way
And still she found no word at all to say

Sacred and Profane Love

Strangely abash'd , and gazing on his face
With old, experienced eyes, she saw no trace
Of aught but innocence, as undefiled
As is the clear gaze of a noble child.
And then a sudden passion without name
Seiz'd her, half fear and half a whelming shame,
And with a wordless cry she turn'd and fled
Into the forest gloom Bewilderèd
Stood Parsifal, with thoughts all unexpressed
And dim surmises surging in his breast ;
Then slowly turn'd him to his path again

IN those grim mountains which the land of
Spain
Rears as her bulwark to the north, there stands
A wondrous palace, never built with hands ,
But in its wilderness of sun-bak'd stone
Ring'd with vast precipices, it has grown
In wild magnificence of dome and tower
By wizard spells of dread, unearthly power.
Klingsor, the great enchanter, to assail
The holy brethren, warders of the Grail,
Had rear'd it there. Long vainly he had
yearn'd
To be enroll'd among that band—then burn'd
In fierce resentment, vowing to bring down
Into the dust their proud and fair renown
And whom he could he slew, or sought to win
By foul temptations to his house of sin.

Out of the Eastland he had brought to be
His paramour, and in black sorcery
His minister, the woman Kundry—one
Of whose dread destiny the tale doth run
100

Kundry

That, standing at her house-door, on the day
When Christ forspent, to Calvary took His way,
From her that then was nam'd Herodias,
He begged a cup of water for the grace
Of God. She mock'd—and He, uncomf'ort'd,
Went on. But God this doom upon her laid—
And all unknown to her this term He made—
That she through all the ages should go on
Deathless, and parch'd with thirst, until she
won

The peace of death, by finding some man such
That all on fire and thrilling at her touch
He yet could thrust her from him. So she went,
Her fierce desires their own dread chastisement,
Forever self-consuming, self renew'd,
A wandering flame of baleful womanhood.
And this was Kundry whom you now behold
Angry asham'd, as in her robe of gold
In Klingsor's inner chamber to and fro
She paces like a tigress. Didst thou know
She cried, what manner of man this youth
should be,

Whose coming, full of peril to thee and me,
Thou saw'st within the crystal globe? I met
The maddest figure that these eyes have yet
Beheld half angel and half fool he seem'd.
I tempted him—he kiss'd me—thou hadst deem'd
The victory won, but I, who brought to pass
At thy behest the fall of Anfortas,
Fled from this stripling! Can thy magic art
Pierce to the depths of this tormented heart
And tell me why?" But Klingsor his black
brows

Knotted in gloomy thought, said "No man knows

Sacred and Profane Love

By any art, or black or white, to tell
What follies in a woman's heart may dwell.
Enough, O Kundry, if my art avail
To meet the perils that I fear assail
Our heads this hour I set thee once to snare
Anfortas. Hither with the Holy Spear
He came to root me out. One summer night,
A day's march from our walls, he learn'd the
might
That those still wield who know the ancient lore
Wrung from the Earth's heart many an age before
The Galilean put poison in men's blood
Round him I made a tranced stillness brood—
The moon shone high, the forest breath'd its balm
On the cool air, and thro' the slumbrous calm
One nightingale above a shadowy mere
Poured forth his golden strain. He wander'd
near
And saw thy pearl-white limbs. . . . No child of
man
Had turned away ! I seized the Spear—a span
Deep in his side I drove it, as he lay
Clasped in thy arms—and ever since that day
A blight hath fall'n on Montsalvat, and shorn
Of half their pride, despondent and forlorn
The Order droops No medicine may heal
Anfortas' wound—the virtue of the Grail
Serves but to keep him living in his woe
The hour is coming, Kundry, when this too,
This heavenly treasure, from his nerveless hand
We shall wrest, thou and I, at our command
Shall be its mighty powers—yea, we shall reign
Over the weakling crew that in disdain
Denied me entrance to their fellowship.

Kundry

And yet, and yet between the cup and lip
I know not what may chance! An ancient tale
Saith that the knighthood of the Holy Grail
Shall in some hour of darkness and despair
Be rescued by a guileless Fool. They bear
This prophecy in mind, and nothing now
Cheers their faint hearts but this. Now comest
thou

From a most strange encounter. Thou didst
meet

A Fool—thou saidst it—who could yet defeat
My wisdom and thy wiles. If this were he!
O potent Art, immortal Sorcery!
Once more command those visions to appear
That change and drift within my crystal sphere!
Oh, teach me where and when upon his path
Once more temptation I may fling, or death!"

Silent and pale was Kundry as he turned
To where upon a golden brazier burned
A smouldering coal. With muttered spells he
heaped
Slowly strange herbs upon it, till there crept
A fragrant mist about the vaulted room,
Through which the shapes of all things seemed to
loom

Dreamlike and strange and very still it grew
While Klingsor from its velvet covering drew
A shining globe of crystal, great and fair

So leave him, poring on the shapes that there
Like clouds float by and turn we now to tell
What wondrous things young Parsifal befell
When lost in wildering thought, abashed, alone,
He wandered forward on his path unknown

Part IV The Guileless Fool

THREE days and nights of wandering in the
wood
Had Parsifal and whiles he shot for
food

Some wild thing with his bow and whiles he
shared

Some charcoal burner's simple meal So fared
He onward till across an open glade

One morning, in the slanting beams that played
On plume and breastplate he beheld a knight
Full armed and nobly mounted At the sight
His heart beat fast—that other as on guard
Sat motionless, and seemed as though he barred
All passage on that path Then Parsifal

Still drawing nearer felt his temples swell
With rising blood marking the silent threat
Of vizored helm and ready lance—but yet
He deemed it courteous to begin with speech
And said "Fair sir good morrow! Canst thou
teach

A stranger in these woods to find the track
Which leads to Montsalvat?" "I bid thee back!"
The other growled By Klingsor's high
command,

Whose word none gainsayeth in this forest land
None thitherward may pass. Who Klingsor is
I know not quoth the lad, nor care but this
I know that if thou seek to bar my way
Thou dost it at thy peril For the fray
Replied the knight, I have more lust than thou
But first it is my lord's will thou shouldst know

Sacred and Profane Love

Whose knight I, Ferris, am, for many a year
Hath warr'd upon Montsalvat, to requite
Great wrongs they did him, and to such a plight
They now are brought, that from them he
hath torn

The magic Spear, that long ago was borne—
So runs their fable—by the hand that shed
The blood of Christ. Their King we left half
dead

And all dishonour'd, and we cannot fail
But soon achieve the conquest of the Grail.
Wherefore be wise, and cast not in thy lot
With those that now, abandon'd and forgot
Even by the God they serve, wait but the hour
When they and all they have to Klingsor's power
Shall lie subject Thou seemst a gallant youth—
For such hath Klingsor welcome, and in sooth
Thou'lt find his service rich in all delight.
Naught can his servants wish but he'll requite
Their valour to their heart's content. Let be
Thy foolish, hopeless quest, and ride with me
To fairer fortune, lordlier reward "

Then thunder'd Parsifal "No more! On
guard!"

Spawn of the Powers of Hell, 'tis thou or I."
With that they drave together furiously.
And though his paltry shield sufficed to guide
The spear of Ferris harmlessly aside,
Yet, as they shocked, his aged horse, o'erthrown,
Crash'd with his rider to the earth. Then down
Alighted Ferris, sword in hand, to kill—
But Parsifal sprang up, and grasping still
His mighty stake, swung it aloft, and laid

The Guileless Fool

So fierce a downstroke on his foeman's head
That helm and buckler shivered, and he lay
A tumbled heap upon the trampled clay,
As though Heaven's bolt had crush'd him. Breath
less there

Awhile stood Parsifal, then sword and spear,
Corslet, and all of the dead knight's array
That still might serve, he gather'd as they lay
These on his horse he bound, and then bestrode
The younger steed, and driving on the road
The laden beast in front, so fared he on.

And thus the long day passed and as the sun
Through painted windows in a holy place
Makes a rich light so in the level rays
That from the sunset's heart of rose and gold
Flooded the wood, did Parsifal behold
A solemn glory fill the forest aisles,
That ever loftier grew with long defiles
Green-carpeted and sown with flowers, where
free

Of tangling undergrowth in majesty
The giant boles of oak and chestnut rose.
Here, as the summer day drew to its close,
Would Parsifal to spend the night prepare.
Then hearing far off on the evening air
The sound of winnowing wings, he halted, still
Crossbow in hand, with ready bolt until
A wild white swan all fearless by him flew
And this with swift unerring shaft he slew
And bore it onward, trusting that ere night
Upon some pool or streamlet he would light
Where he his meal might make, and seek his rest.
And, this thought in his mind, he deem'd it best

Sacred and Profane Love

To take the guidance of the swan, and whither
The bird seem'd homing, to betake him thither.

Thus on he rode, until the wood gave way,
And a still sheet of glimmering water lay
Before him; and he saw an aged man
Beside the brink, with many a snow-white swan
Rustling around him while he gave them food,
With waving wings and necks, a gentle brood.
A little farther off a maiden kneeled,
Holding a bowl of bronze with porridge filled,
And fed the yellow cygnets, with reproof
And laughing menace ever warding off
The long white necks that sought the young ones'
share

And now no sooner were the twain aware
Of Parsifal and his strange cavalcade,
And the tossed heap of snowy plumage laid
Across his saddle-bow, than, all dismay'd,
Mute, motionless, they stared on him, so he
Drew rein, and feeling, albeit he knew not why,
Confused and sham'd, he lighted down Then
spake

That aged man. "O youth, this quiet lake
Is no resort for such as thou, with whom
The signs of death and battle to this home
Of love and peace are brought. What seek'st
thou here—

Thou, the first stranger that for many a year
Our eyes have seen?" Then spake the youth:

"I met,

A day's march hence, an armed champion set
By Klingsor, he averred, to bar the pass
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The Gulleless Fool

That leads to Montsalvat. We fought by grace
Of God I overthrew him, and his gear
And battle-steed I took. Naught seek I here
But water and a couch of moss, a fire
Of fallen boughs, and if this small desire
Thou grant me of thy courtesy at dawn
I ride upon my way The maid had drawn
Now closer to her sire, and as they learned
Of Ferris and his fall, starting they turned
And each on each a moment gazed, their eyes
Filled with great wonder and a strange surmise.
Then spake the sire again Thou hast o'er
thrown

Thy foe, and ours, and God's. Were this alone
The stain upon thy hand! And must thou slay
Innocence too and beauty? Fearless, gay,
Within this fair and wide domain are all
Things that have life. My daughter Blanche's call
Brings the red squirrel from the bough the
snake

Glides to her foot the blackbird in the brake
Sings loudest when she passes near—and now
With the red stain upon that breast of snow
Thy dart hath pierc'd, are death and anguish
wrought

By human hands among the things we taught
To love and trust us. Thus the old man said
And Parsifal bow'd low his proud young head,
While love and sorrow from the world's deep
heart

Wrought for the first time in his own the smart
Of pity and remorse. Silent he set
The crossbow to his knee and grasping it
At either end, the stock of stubborn oak

Sacred and Profane Love

With one strong wrench in pieces twain he broke.
Then glancing up he caught in the wet eyes
Of Blanið such a smile, that for such prize,
It seem'd to him, a man might well have wrought
The mightiest things, and yet deserved it not.
So for a single moment big with fate
A wordless converse, high and passionate,
Their young eyes held, and then they turn'd aside
Flushing, and mutely by the Swan Lord's side
Went Parsifal down a long avenue
Of over-arching oaks, that gave to view
A stately castle, where the old man said
The wanderer that night should lay his head,
And he himself, whom men called Gurnemanz,
Was seneschal and steward of that pleasaunce

Rested and bathed, array'd in knightly weeds
That two young squires who tended on his needs
Had all unbidden to his chamber brought,
Came Parsifal forth, and with their guidance
sought

The banquet hall, where now the evening meal
All should partake. Soon music 'gan to peal
Along the liliated arches of the hall,
Where Parsifal waited what should next befall
And first he saw, the stately portal through,
A pomp of knights come pouring, two by two,
In long blue silver-border'd mantles clad,
Whereof each one upon the shoulder had
The image of a cup in silver done
Thus streamed they in till each his station won.
Then with lower'd eyes and sombre brows
they stood

Like men upon some bitter shame who brood.

The Guileless Fool

Next, shoulder high upon a litter borne,
Entered what seem'd a dying man, so worn,
So pale so piteous did that form appear
Rich furs enwrapp'd him, and his brow did bear
A coronet with many a gem besprent.
Near by to Parsifal he passed and bent
From haggard eyes upon the youth a look
So long, so full of yearning that it shook
The young man's heart with pity and well nigh
Had broken from his trembling lips the cry

O Sire what alleth thee? May aught avail
That man may do thy grievous pain to heal?
But ere the words escaped, he called to mind
How it was charged on him, that should he find
Himself a guest within some great lord's hall,
Naught should he ask of whatso might befall
Strange or uncomely till it seem'd good
To those, his hosts, to tell him what they would.
Thus were his lips by courtly devolr seal'd—
Onward the litter passed, and unreveal'd
The load of pain and mystery that it bore.

But now his wondering eyes toward the door
Again were turn'd, for next there came in sight
A troop of maidens, whereof each a light
Bore in her hand, that wafted rich perfume
Of burning spices through the spacious room.
Then Blandid came, alone. As white as snow
From golden head to little satin shoe
The garments that she wore. Rapt and serene
She gaz'd, as moving slowly on, between
The ranged lines she bore a little tray
Whereon a cloth of emerald velvet lay
And, standing upon this some hidden thing.

Sacred and Profane Love

Beneath a gold-embroider'd covering.
These to the dais at the hall's end she bore,
And set them on a crystal stand before
The stricken King, who with one wasted hand
Covered his eyes And now a low demand
Was mutter'd round the hall . "Unveil, unveil"—
The King half rose, looking with visage pale
And agoniz'd upon the waiting throng.
Silent, he prayed a minute, but ere long
He set his hand upon the covering cloth
And shuddering drew it off, as one most loath
Who does with desperate will some deed accurst
Then, groaning, at his side he clutched, while burst
Through his thin fingers a red gush of blood.

Still mute, but clutching at his own side, stood
Young Parsifal, with pity and wonder thrilled
But now he gazed upon the thing reveal'd,
And saw a crystal chalice, great and fair,
That seemed to pulse forth light To this they bear
In golden baskets cakes of wheaten bread
And these, among the knights distributed,
Change into viands of all kinds, as each
Had will to eat, and empty cups they reach
To every knight, that straight with wine are
brimmed
So speeds the wondrous feast , but mirth is
dimmed
For Parsifal, for all, by that drear thing
Upon the dais, where the wounded King
Lies moaning, tended on by maidens twain,
Who strive with healing balms to assuage the pain
That wrings his side and stanch that bloody
stream

The Guileless Fool

Now in the helpless passion of a dream
To Parsifal the long day seem'd to move,
The day when first he look'd on death and love.
Benumb'd, bewilder'd, when the feast was o'er
He rose, and, led by Gurnemanz, once more
His chamber sought. The old man held his hand
Long while, and strangely long his features
scann'd

Then, with a sigh, commended him to God.
But even while his parting footsteps trod
The echoing corridor the youth lay drowned
In seas of sleep that eddied, soft profound
About the wearied limbs and beating brain
Till morn should wake him to new joy new pain.

Part V The Spear

NOW bloomed the rose of morning in the
sky
And all the encircling woods rang joy
fully

With myriad twitterings of birds whose call
From dreamless sleep awakened Parsifal
Quickly he rose and all unhelped, did on
The warlike gear he had from Ferris won
Then issued forth to greet his hosts resolved
That now at last the mystery should be solved
Of who and what these were, and if in sooth—
For now his heart had half divined the truth—
His way had led him to that holy place
Wherein the Grail by God's mysterious grace
Was housed and adored, and where he felt
Perchance for him another treasure dwelt.

But when he reach'd the banquet hall he found
Nor knight nor squire, nor any sight or sound
Of human life wide open every door
In all the castle, and from floor to floor
He wander'd searching, calling but his voice
Re-echoed idly with a dreary noise
Through the long corridors and empty halls
Then search'd he through the courtyard and the
stalls

That all deserted lay but here he found
His war horse, saddled, to a pillar bound
As ready for the road. Wondering, and sore
At heart at length he mounted and crossed o'er
The lowered drawbridge but he scarce had won
The farther side, when with a clang came down

Sacred and Profane Love

The portcullis behind him. In amaze
He wheel'd his steed, and saw a woman's face
Look from a casement by the gate—and fear
Made his heart quail, so evil did appear
That visage, with grey locks and eyes of fire
Red-rimm'd, and scor'd by lines of passions due.
Ere he could speak, she hissed. "Gander, begone!
Go get thyself a goose, and leave alone
The swans of Montsalvat!" Then in despair
Cried Parsifal "For God's love, tell me where
And how I have offended, for full well
I know, though how it was I cannot tell,
I have ill requited grace bestow'd on me
Far, far beyond my worth." "Didst thou not
see,"

Replied the hag, "the bitter agony
Of Anfortas, and not a word hadst thou
Of pity for his grievous state, nor how
He might be healed? Accursèd be the thought
That tied thy tongue! Thy coming else had
brought

Joy and deliverance, but now, within
The power of foul enchantment wrought by sin
Still must we lie, and still each day the wound
Made by the Holy Spear, that Klingsor found,
Alas! the way to capture, must again
Break forth, and still renew the ancient pain "
Then wept the lad in anguish, and he cried.
"I have sinn'd, I have sinn'd—but oh, may aught
betide

Still to redeem my fault, and buy release
For those so sorely stricken, for whose peace
Gladly my life were given?" There came a
trace,

The Spear

Even as he spoke, of majesty and grace
In that grim countenance that on him glared.
Ride to the South, she spake, and hast thou
fared
Thus onward many a day with single heart,
Thou'lt come to Klingsor's land. There do thy
part
As God shall guide thee. There the Holy Spear
Is guarded well. Redeem and bring it here—
And if once more thou find the hidden way
That leads to Montsalvat, God's mercy may
Yet work through thee the ending of our woe.

She vanish'd from his sight and he to go
Turned slowly pondering on many a thing—
Bland, the swan, the Grail the stricken King—
While still before him like a star burn'd clear
That message of high hope, Redeem the Spear!

SEVEREN days had passed while through the
forest land
Southward he rode, and now on either hand
The crowded stems grew thinner as the way
Mounted, and here and there grim rocks and grey
Thrust upward through the soil. At length he
rode
Into a long ravine, where his horse trode
With many a stumble in the stony bed
Of a dry torrent. Then on foot he led
The weary beast still upward till the light
Failed, and the large moon of a Southern night
Hung o'er the savage glen. Lofty and bare,
But for the writhen pines that rooted there
In fissured rocks, the frowning walls arose

Sacred and Profane Love

Towering about him, seeming to enclose
A space with outlet none save for the track
By which he came. At last a gorge, all black,
Unvisited by any ray of light
From sun or moon, where immemorial night
Lay ever couch'd, he found, and winning through
With toil and pain, upon his eyes a view
Of wildering beauty burst. A garden there
Lay spread before him. In the upper air
Darkly the plumes of many a palm-tree hung
Beside each path to rock or stem there clung
Long trailers, starr'd with blossom, whose rich
scent
Filled all the moonlit air. A deep content
Sang in the low voice of a little stream
That murmured through the vale, with wandering
gleam
Lighting the shadowy meads. Beyond these
bowers
Of Paradise arose the glimmering towers
Of a great palace, builded fair and well,
That drank the sleepy moonshine as it fell
On dome and fretted wall. Paisfal stared,
Rapt with the magic vision—then he fared
Onward again, but ere he could attain
The carven gateway of that palace, fain
Was he to halt once more, for in his way,
Beneath o'erarching boughs of moon-white may,
Even as at first, he saw before him stand
The Lady of the Forest. One small hand
Caught to her bosom a long cymar's fold,
Translucent, shot with gleams of woven gold,
Through which the sheen of lovely side and limb
Showed like drown'd marble in the sea-tides dim.

The Spear

Her night black tresses were unbound, her feet
Bare in the grass she seem'd in that retreat
Its beauty's very soul, unearthly fair
Beyond mortality or grief or care.

Speechless with wonder leaning on his lance
Stood Parsifal and Kundry with one glance
Reading the signs of toil and pain that robbed
His youth of half its radiance, her heart throbbed
With sudden pity Welcome here! she spake,
O gentle friend, whom once I did forsake
Ungently—ah me! little dost thou know,
Nor may I tell thee, why we parted so
Enough—we meet again. Here shalt thou find
Rest, and heart's ease, and all things to thy mind.
Lay off thine arms to-night a healing balm
Breathes from the earth and sky Oh let it calm
The inward strife, the bitterness, the pain
That in thy brows I read, and bring again
The youth I talked with half a summer's day
Not long ago Oh far and far away
Said Parsifal, "seems now that youth of mine.
I am not what I was. A gift divine
Came to my hands—witless I let it go
Speak not to me of peace, for I may know
Peace and content no more till strife hath won
Pardon, or death. But lady till the sun
Be risen again, most fain of rest am I.
Say then who dwells in this fair place and by
What name I have to call thee, whom I deem
Its queen and mistress. Kundry veiled the gleam
Of bitter knowledge in her eyes, then raised
Their silken lashes, and awhile she gazed
Silent upon the young man's face. At last

Sacred and Profane Love

The fount of tears, long sealed, broke forth, and
fast

The brimming drops o'erflow'd, and soon the
proud

And smiling queen no more he saw, but bowed
Before his feet, on which full many a tear

Rained down, there lay a woman in despair

"Oh, leave me not," she cried, and seized the hand
Stretched forth to soothe and bless her, "nor
demand

To learn my shame and woe. What once I was
I too no longer am Oh, let it pass,

That bitter past, and make me wholly thine !

Klingsor thy foe awaits thee here—'twas mine
To lure thee to thy doom Hence, hence in
haste !

More shalt thou learn when, in thy love embraced,
Redeemed, uplifted, at thy side I dwell,

And this shall be my joy, to teach how well

A woman's heart of flame can warm the life

Of one she loves." Heartshaken with the strife

Of thronging passions, Parsifal saw clear

Naught but the beauty, and the pain that here

Writhed at his feet. He stooped and sought to
raise

That stricken form, but Kundry, all ablaze

E'en at his touch with the resistless fire

Of half despairing love and fierce desire,

Sprang to her feet, and round his neck she flung

Her straining arms, their lips together clung

In a wild kiss, and all the scene and all

Memory and thought were drowned for Parsifal

Beneath a whelming flood of fierce delight,

And all his life seem'd made for this one night

The Spear

And still their lips were join'd, when with the pang
Of that high rapture, recollection sprang
Full armed upon him With a broken cry
Of Blaid, Blaid! snatching angrily
The arms that held him, by the shoulders fair
Kundry he seized, and loos'd himself But ere
The words were said that in his bosom strove
For utterance, she scream'd, seeing above
The youth's unconscious head a figure lean
From a tall window and she marked the sheen
Of moonlight on a levell'd spear Around
The youth her arms she clasp'd, and to the ground
Dash'd him with frenzied force and flung
between
Him and the flying death the living screen
Of her fair body Scarce did Parsifal
Know what had chanced, when, rising from his fall,
He saw the gasping woman with the spear
Deep in her breast, and glaring down on her
The dark magician. Mighty then to him
The Lords of Darkness seem'd and all too dim
The light of heaven upon his lonely path.
Uncounsell'd, unbefriended fiercely wroth
But helpless in the toils of death and Hell
He cried upon the love of Christ to quell
The Powers of Evil, as he drew the spear
From Kundry's bosom, with its point in air
Tracing the holy Sign against that form
Which towered above him. Then, as when a storm
Suddenly bursts, and thought and senses reel
Beneath the deafening imminent thunder peal,

Sacred and Profane Love

So suddenly the heavens with blinding flame
Were torn, and with it such an uproar came
As all the thunders of the world in one
Had crashed above his head. Scarcely begun,
The tempest ended, and the moon once more
Reigned in a cloudless sky—but now before
The youth's amazed eyes was nothing left
Of all that fairy scene. The vale, bereft
Of all its plumed palms and scented bowers,
Lay bare, a stony waste—the stately towers
Had vanished like a dream, and he had thought
A dream indeed had mock'd him, were it not
That still before his feet the woman lay
With bleeding breast, and gasped her life away.

Then, as he knelt to raise her head, she smiled,
Tenderly, happily—a little child
Smiles even so to meet its mother's eyes,
When half asleep and cradled soft it lies
Tir'd out with mirth and play at set of sun.
Yet ere the end, for something to be done
Her eyes besought him; with one trembling hand
She touch'd her brow, and grace to understand
Heaven gave him. Near at hand the rivulet
Whisper'd among the rocks, to this he set
His helm, and when a cupful he had won
Swiftly he bore it back, and traced upon
Her brow the sign of Christ. Again she smiled—
But instantly a thing so strange and wild
Was wrought on her that Parsifal in the clutch
Of horror shrieked, for at the chrismal touch
Of water, Time with all the stor'd-up weight
Of all her centuries smote her, and where but
late

The Spear

He saw a woman in her loveliness
Lay now a bald and wizened thing to less
Than human stature shrunk Dead she lay—
'Twas the last mercy that a man could pray
For that which once was Kundry There alone
Parsifal toiling in that place of stone
With his sword's point delved out a little grave
And heap'd above it many a rock to save
That poor marr'd body from the wild beast's
claw
Then lifting up the sacred Spear with awe
He bore it thence, and made his lonely bed
Far from that place of fear where Kundry shed
Her blood because she had loved much and lies
Asleep till Earth's last morning fire the skies.

Part VII . The Deliberer

HOW many a year hath passed, how many
a thing
Befall'n, since Titurcl the war worn
King,

When all was done in vain that man could do
In that beleaguered fortress of Anjou
Knelt, and besought of God to let him die
Or send at last deliverance from on high !
And now the spring returns, and brings again
That sacred day of Christ's victorious pain
Again the woods the flower strewn meads are rife
With herald-signs of a great wave of life
Gathering apace to flood the earth once more.
And still a human spirit in its sore
Affliction, sends to God the piteous cry
For help from powers beyond mortality
Or friendly death to end its bitter pain

Beside the lake of Montsalvat again
Behold the Swan Lord and his daughter fair
Come early forth to breathe the morning air
Sadly they move amid the flush of spring
The old man bowed in patient suffering
But she with quivering lips and restless eyes
That rove the forest glades and the blue skies
As though some hidden secret they might read
Some respite find, some help in bitter need.

And thus beside the lake in sombre mood
Silent they paced, when through the greening wood
They saw the gleam of armour and a knight
Upon the farther shore rode into sight
Then quickly spurred to meet them As for fight
Prepared, he bore a naked sword—his face

Sacred and Profane Love

They might not yet behold, but many a trace
Of desperate battle in his battered gear
They marked. Above his shoulder a great spear
Rose high, but where the gleaming point should be
They saw a leathern casing, heedfully
Made fast with many a thong. Said Gurnemanz
As he drew near: "Stranger, with sword and lance
Who ridest as to war, dost thou not know
What holy day thou dost dishonour so?
Or if indeed by God's will thou art sent
To work our ruin, and our punishment
Fulfil, be sure that thou shalt find no hand
Raised to resist thee, but to God's command
We bow, and hail with grateful heart the blow
That ends at last the long tale of our woe "

"Forgive me," spake the knight, "and God
forgive!

For surely all things on the earth that live
This day should dwell in peace. But many a day
I have lost count of time, from fray to fray
Hurled by the will of Him who made of me
His all-unworthy champion Now I see
The hour is come, the longed-for hour to bring
To you redemption, to your stricken King
Pardon and peace." In the clear voice there rolled
A graver, sterner music than of old.
But well they knew that speech, nor did it need
The opened helm to tell that here indeed,
Where first they saw his face, again they met
With Parsifal. And soon their eyes were wet
With tears of joy and reverence to behold
The sacred Spear, that never in the hold
Of Parsifal to meet a foeman's lance

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The Deliverer

In direst need was aimed Then Gutterman
Their joyful greeting done spake solemnly:
"Hearken my son while I declare to thee
Things greater stranger than then dreamt of yet.
I knew thee for the son of Gamuret
Brother of Anfortas the noble seed
Of Titur el our glorious king now dead
Since first I saw thy face and heard thy name
Thy father fell in battle and the same
Stern lot befell thy brethren but with thee
A little babe thy mother secretly
Fled from her lordly castle to abide
In the wild wood so from thine eyes to hide
Through all thy life the sight of arms and war
Ah, vain indeed the dreams of mortals are
Against God's will! All this as it befell
We learned and much we know not which to tell
Is thine but this we know from many a sign
Vouchsafed us through that Mystery Divine
Whereby we live that in this holy place
The blood of Titur el by God's high grace
Shall ever rule until the Grail once more
Its work achieved It please Him to restore
To Heaven from whence it came how thou art heir
Gamuret's son Redeemer of the Spear
To help us in our darkest hour for know
Since thou didst leave us nigh three years ago
Thine uncle sick with torment and despair
Will do no more his sacred task and ne'er
Hath once unveiled the Cup And so we ride
No more triumphant on the boundless tide
Of mystic life that from its preence flowed
Dearth and decay we know and the dark road
By which our Order hastens to its doom

Sacred and Profane Love

Too plainly do I see. But thou art come,
Our lord, God's servant, with the certain seal
Of many a token, to restore and heal
Our woeful state, and to our anguish'd King
God's pardon and the peace of death to bring.
Delay we not! The throne of Titurel
Awaits its lord. I go before, to tell
The brethren of thy coming, and prepare
The Assembly of the Order, where with prayer
And solemn rites thou shalt be consecrate
To service of the Grail." With looks elate
The old man left them. Yet in that fair hour
Alone they were not, for the eternal Power
That rules the vast enchantment of the spring
Was busy there, and wove its magic ring
Softly around them. Each on each they turned
An all-revealing gaze with eyes that burned
Through gathering tears, then for a moment fleet
They clung together, by one impulse sweet
United, while upon the lips of each
Love trembled into half-articulate speech,
And troth was plighted while the world should last.

Then hand in trembling hand the lovers passed
Beneath the oaks of Montsalvat to gain
Their high mysterious kingdom, there to reign
In dim, half-heavenly glory where the eye
Discerns the dark shapes of mortality
Clearly no more.

So let this tale of woe,
Of strife and victory, that long ago
Was rhymed and written of the Cup and Spear
By Wolfram's knightly pen, be ended here—
Where all the sin, the torment and the strife,
Melt in the infinite sea of Love and Life.

